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JOHN STANLEY

The Sociology of Virtue: The Political and Social Theories of Georges Sorel
387pp. University of California Press.
£22.50
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Georges Sorel was born in Cherbourg, three months before the revolution of February 1848 brought about the first of several violent political changes that he witnessed only from afar. He came of solid Norman middle-class stock, Catholic and monarchist; his mother was the daughter of a mayor of Bailleul, his father a businessman, compulsively honest and only intermittently successful. A first cousin, Albert Sorel, the historian and eventually President of the Third Republic's Senate, would earn a place in the fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which, in 1929, paid no attention to Georges.

The blue-eyed, ruddy youth proved a *far-en-thème*: he graduated with distinction from the Collège de Cherbourg (1864), from the Ecole Polytechnique (1867), which his two brothers also attended, and finally from the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées (1870), just in time to spend the period of the Franco-Prussian war in Corsica. His career as an engineer was smooth and successful, his last thirteen years at Perpignan whence he retired in 1892 - with the Legion of Honour, which he wore for the rest of his life - to buy a small house in Boulogne-sur-Seine, a convenient omnibus ride from the libraries and lecture-halls of the Left Bank. He was forty-five, he had enough money to subsist modestly until his death (in 1923), and he was happily joined to a woman whom he loved very much and whose death in 1897 would leave this lonely man truly bereft. He could henceforth devote himself to what a late letter to Benedetto Croce describes as the great concern of his life: "the historical genesis of morals".

This is the aspect of his work which John Stanley discusses clearly and cogently in a study that leads us from Sorel's earliest writings to his last, arguing for a consistency of motive and interest which other students of the man have inclined to deny. Much of Stanley's organization is reminiscent of the important 1962 study by Georges Gorioli, *Le Pluralisme dramatique de*

Georges Sorel; but Gorioli, displeased with his subject's later divagations, ended his book with the *Reflections on Violence*, when Sorel still had fourteen years to live. Stanley carries through to the end, and his contribution is the richer for it. On the other hand, Stanley, like most of those who have tackled this complex man, shows little interest in relating the theories - to which he does handsome justice - to the experience that generated them, other than intellectual; or the world in which they were supposed to fit.

He devotes nine lines to the woman, probably the only woman, Sorel loved, "the companion of 22 years of work", to whom he dedicated two books, including the *Reflections on Violence*, yet whom he never married. Pierre Andreu, to whom we all refer for information, tells us that Sorel's parents would not countenance his marriage to this Marie David, the daughter of poor peasants, a factory-worker, then maid in a Lyon hotel, where she nursed an ailing Sorel to recovery and a common-law marriage. We do not know what secret reluctance or promise kept him from wedding her after his father's death in 1879, or his mother's death in 1887, which left him the small income that made him independent. But it is not beside the point that he sometimes used her name as a pseudonym, that (as Stanley mentions) she inspired his work; that (as he does not) Sorel said he "worked to raise a philosophical monument worthy of her memory"; and that - as he once reflected - "it is thus that our intellectual life depends in large part on the chance of a meeting".

Stanley could also have mentioned - but it is not his purpose - that the reaffirmation of morals, and hence their analysis, was very much *à la mode* when Sorel's first attacks on intellectuals and on the ambient decadence were published in 1889. Images of political opportunism and corruption run thick and fast through Sorel's pages, as through the contemporary press: the political industry, the mafia, Tammany Hall, politico-criminal associations, and so on, are denounced with a virulence worthy of Karl Marx. Decadence - social, moral - increasingly fashionable since the 1820s, had figured prominently on the national agenda since the defeat of 1871. Its manifestations may have appeared particularly striking in the 1880s (Le

Décadent itself appeared in April 1886, proclaiming that "religion, mores, justice, all *decade* [sic]"). So would the mounting tide of financial scandals, political crises and social unrest that seemed to confirm the decay of social and individual coherence, but also of energy and will, disturbing to this very moral man.



Georges Sorel

Some, like Ernest Renan, reacted to an impression of triviality, irresponsibility and immorality by a kind of quietism and refusal of social responsibility: "France is dying. Do not trouble her agony." Others, like Emile Durkheim, insisted rather on "the ties that unite men" and affirm their solidarity. It was these ties and these dynamic forces that Sorel sought to identify, the criteria of a moral order which could combine traditional virtues and modern productivity. Sorel's first writings, then, are about

- and against - Renan and Durkheim, and the secularist, scientific pretensions of those who try to found a social science. In *The Trial of Socrates* (1889) he attacks intellectual pretensions of superiority, apparently confirmed by the prestige of "Science". Why Socrates? because for Socrates "those who know" carry a spark of the divine that sets them apart from and above the mediocre mass. Such alleged superiority makes democracy impossible, justifies oligarchy based on sophistry and artifice, and discourages high performance among common people. Socrates' pretension to "science" was more impressive and more politically effective than claims based only on the relativist rhetoric of the sophists, and the arrogance of Socrates' followers anticipated the worst form of government: a union of philosophers and politicians, in which those who can afford to buy expertise share power with those able to acquire it, and science becomes not a method of knowledge but a recipe for gaining particular advantages. A government of shopkeepers and academics is worse than a government of sophists, because it bolsters sophistry with principle. If philosophy is about theory, power is about practice. As professional politicians encouraged by "principle" become more arbitrary, philosophers innocent of practical life become more utopian, less open to other opinions; along with a sense of reality, freedom itself seeps away. But - Sorel liked to quote Vico - man knows only what he makes. When thought is abstracted from reality, politics loses its moral roots because its discourse then is based, and turns upon, abstractions.

A social morality that is not lived, a morality that has to be taught, will not hold. Morals that have to be argued, can also be argued away. The Sophists had disturbed traditional authorities and acceptances, Socrates, trying to restore these, weakened them further. His dialectical method could lead to questioning everything, not least the classic virtues and legitimacies, hence to an absence of moral certitude and, with the loss of certitude, the principle of legitimacy disappears from law itself.

Before Socrates, virtue was born of experience. Man in his productive household, or in defence of his polis, discovered "his own best qualities": courage, patience, disregard of death, devotion to glory, and the good of his

fellows, in one word, his virtues". Abstract intellectual constructs have nothing to do with virtue, which is integral to the productive life. No virtue grows from abstractions, no social heroism from bureaucratic institutions. Only producers can run a society where production takes place; for productivity suggests the action appropriate to it, in which a man can discover - and can forge - his virtue.

The essay, written in the mid-1880s, is interesting, but roughly cobbled together. Sorel later confessed to Croce that he found *Le Prole*, "composed in the provinces", poorly documented, vague on lots of points, and not to be republished. But it contains most of Sorel's major themes, reflects his critical strength, and also his style: vituperative, relentless and dour, with little care for charm or readability.

It has been suggested that, as a *polytechnicien*, Sorel would be unsympathetic to the professional intellectuals that the Sorbonne and the Ecole Normale produced. But his abhorrence of abstraction extended to the rationalist tradition of the School itself: its Cartesian way of looking at the world in terms of mathematical laws on whose understanding reason, order and authority were based; its Comtist fondness for the elaborate techno-scientific models Comte had described as positive philosophies; its aspiration to organize society by science: "a social physics" that, in Sorel's view, led only to mandarinism and stultification.

Sorel found Descartes brilliantly reductionist: his creation "artistic", hence superficial; his heritage better suited to conversation than to scientific study: "a good intellect familiar with Cartesian reasoning could find an answer to anything". Mathematics leads to explanations which reduce all phenomena to general, universal laws, obscuring the particulars that are reality. Total explanations lead to would-be total societies and political systems.

As his second published essay (1887) testifies, Sorel preferred the probabilist approach of Cournot, for whom theories were simply convenient devices whose inherent truth was dubious and, really irrelevant; and that of J.-H. Poincaré, the mathematician, who looked on scientific theories as useful concepts -

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or, as he said, conventions – which only continuous testing could validate. (Sorel ignored Poincaré's remark, when the latter testified at the Dreyfus trial a decade later, that probability theory should never be applied to moral sciences.) The Ecole Polytechnique, said Sorel, had forgotten its original purpose, and was the worse for that. The military engineers who founded it were after "rules practical and exact enough to resolve day to day problems". Their successors sought universal truths. But society is about everyday problems, and universal truths suggest misleading utopias which, like some sciences, consist of clear propositions, logically connected, claiming accuracy and efficiency, and tempting the vulgar to absolute application. Human values do not lend themselves to the sort of scientific study that could extrapolate the future from what was or is, or relate cause and effect with any confidence. Science cannot probe the human conscience; history is not a science but an art of the imagination.

Durkheim's attempt to transmute individual psychology into a larger whole not identical to the sum of its parts is unconvincing social alchemy. History is not a set of laws, there are no historical laws which determine effect from cause, there are only hypotheses about an infinite complexity of causes. If history can only predict the past, it follows – as Sorel argued contra Durkheim – that on the future we can have only *indeterminate* (sic) views, expressed solely in the language of artistic imagination. This relegation of the future to imagination placed it outside the purview of would-be science, now demoted to mere social speculation. It also dealt a serious blow to Marx's claim that there could be a science of society or of man as predictive as natural science, that we could produce a "natural history of labour" to match the natural history of plants; and here Sorel quoted Marx against the Marxists: "The social revolution of the nineteenth-century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future."

Sorel had been attracted to Marx, whom he read rather late, in life, because of the German's insistence that social (for Sorel, moral) science could only develop by examining the historical course of economic activity. But he soon found Marxism too abstract, a new social astrology (why not astrology?) that ignored the non-economic aspects of historical development. He found Marxian belief in the eventual abolition of the division of labour, naïve. Nor did he find such a prospect desirable. Natural man, the lapsed Catholic was convinced, inclines to sloth and to routine. He can escape his own inertia only through "incessant labour", rather than through emancipation from it. Capitalist competition can save men from their own mediocrity, whip them out of sluggishness, revivify initiative and inventiveness. Marx's man escapes alienation by escaping capitalism. Sorel's man escapes his own inertia and decay under the impact of capitalist competition, he does not escape alienation, but combats it through labour – a recipe very similar to what the Republic's schools then taught.

Stanley makes clear that Sorel disliked the Marxists not only because their thinking was fixed, hence eventually reactionary; but also because, resolutely intellectual, they remained just as resolutely out of touch with concrete economic developments, and looked largely to the state for the solution of their problems. If Marx can claim that economic developments have made the world ripe for revolution, Sorel can claim that we do not need the state to reinforce economic claims. True, social revolution is not achieved through the state, but through productive processes. Real Marxists who want to transform the political order should turn to economic solutions, not political ones. Instead of this, the Social-Democratic leaders – a bourgeois oligarchy of demagogues – concentrate on spreading legends that reduce their social programme to formulae of class war, revenge and "creative hatred". The more reformist their deeds, the more revolutionary their words. But socialism "is not a closed arena in which only workers and bosses struggle". Such a reductive, catastrophic concept turns capitalists and proletarians into abstractions – mechanisms in the economic

system. A more realistic view of socialism suggests the multi-class interpretation that can be found in Marx's own *Eighteenth Brumaire*, which recognizes many classes, as well as other groupings: familial, political, national.

Like class relations, economic relations are complex and will continue so, as in small businesses or in farming (it is silly to suggest, as Marx does, the necessary disappearance of small businesses, or of the idiosyncrasy of rural life). Conflict exists and will continue to exist, but no historical "law" ensures any particular outcome, let alone the cataclysmic end of capitalist society. The kind of Hegelian fatalism that inspired Marx's utopian guesses led him and his followers to delfy history as a moving force. But history, as we have seen, began "entirely in the past", and there is every reason to think that the future proletarian revolution will be quite different from its predecessors. Which is not to say that Marx's predictions should be dismissed, but that they should be regarded as tactical devices, "rhetorical artifacts", allowing the use of images that give an especially clear impression of the social movement – that is, as a myth.

And so Sorel proceeds to analyse the predictions away while affirming their tactical usefulness, by attacking *The Illusions of Progress* (1906). Traditional historical thought tends to pessimism: it records the complicated clash of motives and events, the tension between what is and what ought to be, between intention and achievement, the accommodation of ideals to dreary realities, and thus suggests a plurality of experiences and possibilities. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, history shifted from this cyclical to a linear view, coloured by the concept of infinite improvement. Pessimism was replaced by the belief that imperfections were no more than setbacks on the path to perfection, once-mysterious fate was supplanted by explicable history, and tragedy became a part of the great beneficent plan of historical fulfilment. When accident and tragedy are rationally explained and integrated in a larger plan, the difference between what is and what ought to be, and the problems arising when one tries to reconcile the two, are both obscured by placing everything on a line between past and future, and claiming that what is can become what ought to be: that is, by utopianism.

The old pessimistic view of history – that is, of human destiny – did not preclude improvement; rather, it made it more likely by approaching it piecemeal. It was the idea of progress that turned the idea of fractional improvement into a vast and totalitarian "science" of infinite perfectibility. Such notions, and the abandonment of pessimism, the *Illusions* argues, go with a waning fear of sin, the ebb of respect for chastity, and the general irresponsibility suggesting that one does as one pleases without fear of consequences. Historical inevitability displaces personal responsibility. Worse still, a heedless optimism, drawing on the idea of progress for arguments, gains over pessimistic realism.

In this view, whatever change of régime occurs is seen as a step on the road to progress. *Ancien régime*, liberal democracy, social democracy, are simply parts of a continuum in which progress remains the ideology of the rulers of the moment. Whoever these may be, the state's administration grows stronger, civil servants perpetuate themselves as part of the dominant classes. In this in other matters, current democracy is no more than the corrupt caricature of the *ancien régime*. The vulgarization of knowledge has not led to better choice, or more effective control, of alleged "representatives". Whether kings or people are declared to be sovereign, both are dominated by their servants. Nothing is more aristocratic than democracy. The "oligarchy of intellectual and political professionals", trained in institutions accessible only to the few, continues to exploit the productive masses.

As one régime after another is legitimized by history, as every improvement is taken to effect improvement, or a move towards improvement, change is institutionalized, revolutionary activity discouraged, revolutionaries co-opted into a process in which progress is a

given. The social democrats are the heirs of royal bureaucrats (Turgot also fostered progressive changes). Their ideology is a soporific, their democracy the assertion of centralism against local liberties, of equality at any price, of unity over plurality. Yet true popular power, as Sorel sees it, lies in plurality. Political pluralism alone can preserve individual freedom, as scientific pluralism preserves cultural freedom; and he insists, with Proudhon – and Gramsci, and Alain de Benoist – that the culture of the people is more important than the rule of the people. The importance of socialism lies in the way it changes – or can change – an individual's life. So, "everything that tends to diminish the spirit of responsibility, the value of personal dignity, the energy of initiative", must be condemned. It is not force that counts, but education: "the moral formation of the working classes through personal experience and with a view towards self-government"; and this is to be done through modest institutions, organized by workers and with no pretension to revolutionizing the world.

Such institutions – however exiguous – were now at hand, since the law of 1884 had legalized labour unions, and worker-run organizations appeared in 1888 with the first *bourses du travail*. At their congress of 1892, the federation of *bourses du travail* had rejected "bloody revolutions from which the bourgeoisie alone benefits", opting instead for a great refusal: "the universal and simultaneous suspension of the productive force, is the general strike". It mattered little that the idea of the general strike might be only partly true, or purely imaginary. Here was an alternative to "political" revolutions: a pragmatic device within the workers' competence and outside the realm of politicians' politics. It was also, for Fernand Pelloutier, the *bourses* leader, and for Sorel, who never mentioned his name until Pelloutier was dead, a revolutionary notion equally powerful but less deadly than the old, that could mobilize mass sentiment, and lead decentralized unions to act without a central direction. This is where the hope for the future lay.

Unlike the Marxists, Sorel had no interest in capturing the state (he does not think that leads to its abolition), in catastrophic revolution (one more blood-bath for the people), in one more stage of political continuity between an old ruling class and a new. The more social reforms seek to lull the working class, the more important it is for socialists to counter the reformist image of progress with an image of catastrophic revolution. The general strike fits this need perfectly, because it aspires to be both total and economic; and Stanley reminds us that economy of violence, not violence itself, was Sorel's chief concern. Instead of a brutal revolution that accomplishes little, Sorel would have the proletariat "walk away" from the state, concentrate energies in new institutions which would radically decentralize the authority structure ("divide France into a dozen independent states and abolish Paris") while preserving the technological and economic advances capitalism brought about. Were that to happen, producers would be left to themselves, would learn self-reliance, would be free to use their creativity in a constant renovation of the economy. That is what the politicians, especially socialist politicians, prevent.

Just as the state maintains its supremacy through the ideological eyewash of progress, demagogic leaders appeal to the masses with the ideological hogwash of distributive justice, appealing to envy, to greed, to the desire for vengeance – "a sentiment of extraordinary power, especially with the weak". This is what Jaures had justified as creative hatred, and what Sorel dismisses as a caricature of the class struggle, proposing instead a more creative motive: "Men who participate in great social movements represent their immediate action in the form of images of battles that would assure the triumph of their cause. I propose to call these constructions myths: the syndicalist general strike and Marx's catastrophic revolution are myths". Social poetry that can inspire men "to prepare for a battle to destroy what exists".

There is nothing surprising about the lapsed Catholic appreciating the "old heroic spirit" of Pius IX, admiring the

constructs of primitive Christianity and of the Reformation, expressions of the will, and mythical constructs as much as the general strike. Christianity became an institution when existing morals adjusted to it, and it adjusted to existing morals. But true Christianity and true socialism share an ethic of self-sacrifice and ceaseless struggle in which virtue and nobility of spirit far outrank the aspiration to justice or comfort. More important, religion suggests that certain ideas are impervious, beyond rational thought, immune to criticism. Like rationalist socialism, rationalist liberal Christianity is vulnerable to ideological analysis. Myths are irrefutable, and this is what makes them a historical force.

As Eduard Bernstein had said, whom Sorel cited with approval: "the movement is everything, the end is nothing". So the progressive illusion that the end justifies the means because the end is certified, is now replaced by a rebellion in which means become the end and the rebellion is everything.

Revolution becomes pure and simple revolt, and Sorel points out with satisfaction that this leaves no room for sociologists, for fashionable friends of social reform, or for intellectuals bent on thinking for the proletariat. The proletariat can fight its own fights, and the myth is the labourer behind which they march to battle – to action, without which there can be no success. Attempting to predict the lineaments of success, of socialism achieved, is as foolish as pretending to fix the date of its coming. In any case, socialism "is not outside us; it is in our hearts": a mentality, a surmounting of the sluggish "natural nature", a moral transformation that would reintroduce creativity into our daily lives. "Socialism is a moral question."

Sorel's workers do not rebel against poverty, but against the failure of the economic system to live up to its potential. His criticism of the capitalist class is not based on distributive injustice, but on the view that capitalists inhibit productivity. Intellectuals and politicians, too, are worse than useless: counter-productive, because men who make nothing do not know how to unify theory and practice. But the violence to be wrought against them will be as little violent, as little destructive, as circumstances permit. Violence is to be sublimated towards labour and practical activity. When the moment comes, workers will simply turn their backs on all parasites and carry on on their own. Meanwhile, each particular strike, however minor, can become a partial *ricorso*, a tiny renewal of history and a mini-restoration of heroic values, which would contribute to "the accumulated vision on which the myth of the general strike must be based".

Unfortunately, at least for Sorel, even while *Reflections on Violence* was being written and published, the bloody strikes and clashes of 1908 were washing away the poetic character and stoic heroism attributed to strikes; and union activity turned more to raising wages than towards autonomy. The proletariat was becoming bourgeoisified, its leaders, as one of them declared, "reading not Sorel but Alexandre Dumas. The old republican *grande bourgeoisie* was being replaced by an intellectual caste, a dictatorship of those "bohemians" whom Marx had once denounced in Louis-Napoleon's government and whose final triumph Sorel deplored in the "Dreyfus revolution": the decay of the ideals and *elan* of the late 1890s into the sophistries and compromises of Dreyfusism in power, and guzzling at the trough. Disgusted and dismayed, Sorel turned to other, potentially invigorating enthusiasms. Like religious faith, national myths emerged from poetic language and shared a certain invulnerability; and in the Action Française Sorel thought he recognized "the only serious national movement" around. He did not know and did not care whether Maurras could bring back a king to France. But the sharp-quilled Provencal confronted "the dull and reactionary bourgeoisie", shaming them with their defeat and trying to give them a doctrine, for action. Maurras's monarchy was as much a myth as the Great Strike: a pragmatic means of inculcating the spirit of resistance and anticipation. This seemed briefly exciting, until Maurras turned out to be no more than Bonapartism in

disguise, exacerbating the crisis of authority by emphasizing popularity based on persuasion and ability based on force.

Charles Péguy, too, attempted to restore the spirit of a republican government whose original mission had degenerated into politics. Reducing republicanism to political administration, monarchism reduced to meritocracy; nothing fails like success. Péguy tried to restore republican morality by combining heroism and national tradition with the mystery of Christian faith: no more myth that would shelter us from experience, just as Sorel's friendship did. Maurras lost Sorel's respect by putting politics first, thus politicizing his own mystique and reducing monarchism to meritocracy. Sorel drew Péguy's ire by slipping into the vulgar antisemitism he had himself explained in 1900 as the natural child of popular revolt when moral traditions lacking. (Just as perceptively, he had added that its future could well be greater than many then believed.) Appropriately, by then, Sorel had exhausted all possible *ricorsi*, and no longer believed in a regeneration of the French spirit. The Socialist was "dead and buried", the Syndicalist "impotent", the royalists had been written off. Bergson was "exhausted", his philosophy fallen into "platitudes". Claudel and Péguy were "sage spirits". There was "not a single man with something serious to say".

The *Reflections on Violence* had denounced a situation where "the ideology of a timorous humanitarian middle class, professing to have had its thought from the conditions of existence, is grafted onto the degeneration of the capitalist system". Only one thing could halt the rot: a great foreign war, which might restore "lost energies". But, when the war came, the embittered old man did not have one good thing to say about it about the reduction of Allied ideology to demagoguery (what could you expect from political pollution?), or about a peace treaty in which he saw a triumph of demagogic plutocracy. At nothing appeared to rekindle hope.

Stanley shows that, while Sorel's interest in Fascism and Bolshevism was real, his sympathy for them was mitigated. He did not think much of Fascist myth, nor of Fascist violence, which did not tend to destroy the state; he was uncertain about Mussolini. "Does anyone know where he is going?" In any case, he will go far. Bolshevism was more intriguing, its revolution seeming to demonstrate that an exceptional act motivated by a powerful myth enables a movement to "force" history. But the Russian experiment would be tested by whether it could construct "a republic of producers, capable of embodying economy as progressive as that of capitalist democracies". Before Sorel died, in 1922, he knew this was not to be. Bolshevism had failed to recognize the peasants' "instinctive protest" for collective work, had reversed the traditional absorption of the Russian workers, had reversed the terrible diminution of the productivity of labour. What would you expect of a man whose history? 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Singled out by spirits

Eva Gillies

LYALI WATSON

Lighting Bird: The Story of One Man's Journey into Africa's Past
241pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
0 340 27999 0

In 1955, a sixteen-year-old English boy, whose stepfather had just taken up a teaching post in Johannesburg, drifted out into the African bush armed with a pocket-knife and a bagful of salt (which, he knew from H. M. Stanley's writings, might be useful for trading). At first the local people took pity on the (clearly) deranged white adolescent, and left pawpaws and eggs in his path. Later, he learnt to cope: to trap rock hyraxes, steal prey from the big cats, eat caterpillars as the tribesmen did. Still later, he discovered he had a gift for handling snakes – and thenceforth supported himself by selling their venom to Johannesburg laboratories. The local Africans, to whom all snakes were associated with the cosmic Giant Serpent, became convinced that he had special spiritual gifts and named him Rudiogwa, Father of Snakes.

Seven years later, Rudiogwa walked into Professor Raymond Dart's workroom at the University of Witwatersrand, and obligingly produced evidence (in the form of a ritually-made bone knife) for a surviving osteo-archaeological culture of just the kind Dart himself had postulated at the Third African Congress of Prehistory in 1955. Dart was, naturally, enchanted; offered the odd young man advice and reading-lists; even found a little money from a charitable trust, and sent Adrian Boshier out on his travels again.

Among the Northern Sotho tribesmen, Rudiogwa continued to prosper exceedingly. Not only was he the Father of Snakes: he also had – like Julius Caesar, like Dostoevsky – the "sacred disease", epilepsy, clearly showing him to be possessed by spirits. To Boshier it came as a surprise that the embarrassing fits he had fought so hard to suppress should, in a different cultural context, be a source of honour, power and spiritual prestige. But being singled out by the spirits implied, he found, a definite vocation: he must

submit himself to them, seek training as a diviner and complete the initiation which, in the eyes of the tribesmen, had already been set in motion by epilepsy and the handling of snakes. The seeking of esoteric knowledge – formerly seen as a threatening, white man's intrusion – was now regarded as his proper business; he was sent up into the Makgabeng mountains to learn more and (after the next epileptic attack) apprenticed to the old priestess of the caves.

Boshier, understandably, seems to have done his utmost to resist: he had fought epilepsy all his life, must he now succumb to mumbo-jumbo? But the caves he had found in the mountains were alive with rock paintings and, the next time he went back to Johannesburg to report to Dart, he met that other and more celebrated cultural anthropologist, the Zulu driver and writer Credo Mutwa. Mutwa, taken up into the caves, "read" the paintings with his usual confidence – and the younger man was encouraged to continue on the curious path life seemed to have mapped out for him. He was duly initiated; discovered further caves; found in one of them a "herd" of sacred drums abandoned and rotting; got the tribesmen to restore and consecrate them; set up a highly successful rainmaking ceremony; and, in 1978 – by then worn out by increasingly frequent epileptic attacks – was dragged up dead from the Indian Ocean. Only then, from the diaries and notes he had left behind, did his white contemporaries realize he had been an epileptic.

We are not told what stories are related, among the different groups of Northern Sotho, about the Father of Snakes who brought back the sacred drums and made rain come at last. On the other side of the cultural divide, however, Boshier's life can be clearly seen to have all the makings of myth: a Rider Haggard, a Laurens van der Post would envy Lyali Watson his material. The sixteen-year-old who originally bitch-hiked into the countryside outside Johannesburg – the arrogant, horny youth who wandered into Dart's work-room – the author of some dozen-and-a-half specialized articles in various South African journals – these come to be seen, in the end, as only the more prosaic avatars of a shadowy, universal, hero-figure: one who undertook strange journeys, was

initiated into forbidden secrets and in the end swallowed up into the unplumbed, estranging sea. White South Africa too has its mythographers, of whom Lyali Watson is one of the most eminent.

Some form of Jungian "machinery" is almost as obligatory for this genre as the Olympian variety for classical epic; and Watson's is peculiarly neat and beguiling. It consists of four "divining bones", carved on one side only with traditional abstract motifs and representing, we are told, the Old Men, the Old Women, the Youth and the Maiden. The significance, for Boshier's story, of the Maiden is perhaps a little unclear; but the carved motifs appear, in various combinations, as chapter headings, and the reader can have fun working out their appositiveness, in each particular case, to the subject-matter. (It must have been tempting, too, to extrapolate from the sixteen possible "throws" of the divining-bones to the sixteen principal configurations of the better-known West African divinatory system of Ifa; but, if Watson was aware of the temptation, he has wisely resisted it.)

Now, you either quite enjoy this sort of thing, or you loathe it. To be fair, *Lighting Bird* is not presented as a work of scholarship; there is an index and a bibliography of Boshier's own publications, but no map, no footnotes and no more general list of references to back up Watson's more sweeping generalizations about nature and culture. There are a good many unsubstantiated assertions of a kind particularly distressing to specialists: Sotho country is throughout equated with an undifferentiated "Africa" and the beliefs and customs of its people with the workings of "the prehistoric mind". On the other hand, there are also some sensible remarks, for instance about the highly ethnocentric division of experience implicit in our use of the word "supernatural", which, while particularly welcome in a popular book, are probably also quite useful reminders to the same specialists. The writing is lushly seductive, calculated to raise feelings of discomfort in the authors of most scholarly monographs; but whether, for any given reader, this *biographic romance* will be more infuriating or more enriching is probably, in the last resort, a matter of temperament.

Going innocently

Joseph Hone

ERIC NEWBY

A Traveller's Life
302pp. Collins. £8.95.
0 00 21874 2

Though he denies the intention, Eric Newby has written an autobiography purely in terms of his travels. From a nightmare trip as a baby round the less salubrious parts of Barnes in 1920, through the *foie gras* filled food-halls of Harrods as a child, to a nervous few days in the Olifson Hotel from Graham Greene's *The Comedians* in Port-au-Prince – this is a collection of scintillating vignettes: part travel, part life. The only criticism to be made of *A Traveller's Life* is that it lacks the true shape and continuity of a real journey while the episodic nature of the travels doesn't allow for a properly linked or comprehensive account of Newby's own life. The result is an unusual but not entirely satisfying compromise – like a cake with two flavours, both delicious, but not ideal in combination. That said, *A Traveller's Life* is none the less a feast.

Newby has several crucial virtues lacking in more recently acclaimed travel writers. In brief, seeing the salient points in each event or country. A sharp phrase suffices to describe landscape – "the atmosphere was incandescent with the brightness of a well tended gas mantle", and much like a good novelist he works through a few precisely remembered details – the vital factor in people and in places – rather than a complete inventory of the nature and faces. A lot of his effects come between the lines. He gives us the

essence, which informs, but which much more invites us to fill in the picture for ourselves. Thus Newby is one of the few travel writers who makes you want to follow in his footsteps. He offers us all the chance of completing his odyssey – at least in the mind, for one has to add that most of the journeys taken here are to places since ruined or altered out of all recognition.

Newby's world, as described in *A Traveller's Life*, both at home and abroad, is no longer exists. A product of the old "middle-middle class", brought up between the wars in a spacious Edwardian service flat by the Thames where there were porters, cooks, chauffeurs and nannies, and where the loudest midday sound was Harrods' van "come to supply the family's every need", Newby remembers a childhood so remote that his travels through it now are like an archaeologist's. He sifts through the shards with objective care. He never sentimentalizes. Instead there are just the details, deftly handled: newspaper quotes, verbal photographs, the past suddenly vivid in the remembered brass-bordered windscreen of the Napier car, the sumptuous menu from a picnic on the way to a Devon seaside holiday.

Ox tongue and Stilton. Huntley & Palmer's Oval Water Biscuits... Ventachellum's Sweet Sliced Mango Chutney... Whiteway's Dry Devonshire Cider for the grown-ups, and for me lemonade, made at home by Ellen.

And as he travels on – into the shade of the prison bars, through a war in Italy and towards a collection of contemporary tourist horrors – Newby never loses this childhood freshness of

vision, his essential innocence as a traveller. Perhaps this is his greatest gift – and the reason, certainly, behind his resignation from that perpetually ideal job, travel editor of *The Observer*. His journeys are not professional – least of all are they made in order to encourage more package tourists, more horrors. Without being elitist, academic or wilfully bizarre, his travels are all extensions of his own haphazard wishes, if not the need to fill in or confirm the details of some childhood book: Arthur Mee's *Children's Colour Book of Lands and Peoples*, for example, or a classic Victorian account of the Court of the Scarglio in Constantinople, which first took him to that city.

Newby travels as if to continue his education and the guide he takes with him is some old tutorial book, as yet unappeared, from his own past. Thus the landscapes here, one-dimensional in so many other travel books, have a real depth, linked as they are to some youthful dream or need. Like many Englishmen before him, Newby is best on his desert journeys – a trip along the ruins of the old Hejaz Railway into the memories of Lawrence's Jordan and a visit to St Katharine's monastery in Sinai. And though he travels by car, not camel, his view of these waste places is comparable to Doughty's or Lawrence's – where he gazes out over a wilderness that in part "resembled a huge sheet of coarse sandpaper, in others milk chocolate that had melted and then set again."

Journey through Pakistan (54pp. Bodley Head, £14.95, 0 370 304896) by Mohamed Amin, Duncan Willetts and Graham Hancock, a journey along the course of the Indus, with 188 colour illustrations, is to be published next week.



"A thief dressed up as a woman", one of 335 photographs in Weegee's New York. Photographien 1935-1960 (388pp. Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 3 92137 84 3). The pictures, many of them taken in the Depression, convey a vivid impression of New York, from strip-clubs to opera-houses, with the emphasis on nightlife, the underworld and the poor. They are preceded by an autobiographical essay.

Listing heavily

Alan Ross

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Steaming to Bamboola: The World of a Tramp Freighter
222pp. Collins. £7.95.
0 00 21666 8

The crew of the Columbianna, an old freighter sailing out of Charleston and Bremerhaven bound, must rank, on this evidence, as one of the most literary crews in modern times. When the ship rolls, which it does almost permanently, someone is immediately reminded of B. Traven's *Death Ship* – "it was about a doomed freighter cruising these same waters". In the Gulf of Mexico, "a tangerine quarter moon hanging off the stern", the off-duty hands discuss *Apocalypse Now*.

"I think *Heart of Darkness* was better," said Bob Casabel. Casabel knew literature and knife fighting equally well. "Conrad and Melville and H. M. Tomlinson are rarely out of someone's thoughts, even if it is only the author's. This is not to be sneezed at; it can happen, even with such an unlikely mob as Christopher Buckley found himself among on the Columbianna. Unfortunately, though we come to know everyone else on board, we do not get to know Buckley at all. He is the absentee author, all-observing but non-existent. His book in consequence, despite its many incidental merits, has a hollow heart. The author relates to no one and the voyage has no narrative pressure.

This is all the more a pity, for in most respects *Steaming to Bamboola* is an impressive addition to the contemporary literature of sea travel. It belongs, properly, on the same shelf as Malcolm Lowry's *Ultramarine*, James Hanley's *Boy* (as also his *The Ocean, Levine, Sailor's Song* among others), and, certainly, Traven.

Buckley may have given nothing away about himself – he is never even addressed by the other members of the crew – but he succeeds in re-creating brilliantly their thoughts, memories and characters. Although ostensibly describing only one transatlantic trip, the book, through reminiscence, takes in the Second World War, Vietnam, the China Seas, the Arctic, the Bay of Bengal, the Caribbean, and most of the exotic as well as hellish places in the world.

Buckley's faintly Dos Passos-like method, while firmly establishing the atmosphere and detail of freighter life, is to let his officers and men simply talk. He is in a dab hand at dialogue, and ghostly though his own presence is, the others really jump off the page. A half-dozen of his characters – all real people, he tells us – stay in the mind long after the Columbianna has set sail on a new voyage, to Puerto Rico, this time without the author.

Buckley is a great one for list-diseases, items of equipment, stores, ports visited etc. Here is a typical paragraph:

Many of America's famous ships have had distinctively American names: *Manhattan*, *Savannah*, *Mayaguez*, *Pueblo*. The C.I.A.'s Russian sub-catcher was named *Glomar Explorer*. Richard Henry Dana sailed to California, an almost unknown land, on the brig *Albatross*, and came back worldily wise as the *Alert*. Melville signed on as boy aboard the packet ship *St. Lawrence*, later on the whaler *Acushnet*, *Lady Ann*, *Charles* and *Henry* finally on the man-of-war *United States*. Nelson Algren crossed the Pacific with a trunkful of Hemingway books on the *Malaysian Mail*. Hart Crane committed suicide leaping into the Caribbean off the freighter *Orizaba*. One of the last fully rigged American sailing ships was called *Tahiti*, "teller of tales", the name given Robert Louis Stevenson by the South Seas natives.

Another fifty names of ships follow in various contexts. If such things as the *Beaufort Scale* or the Pilsnoll line come to be mentioned as to how they got their designation as to how they got their name. This is often enjoyably informative; in general, Buckley is a treasure-trove of out of the way facts and obscure aspects of sea life.

It should be said that *Steaming to Bamboola*, through its impressionistic technique, manages not only to convey the realities of sea life with proper respect, but often to be extraordinarily funny in the process. Buckley has an admirable ear for turns of speech, both black and white, and he has the novelist's gift of circumlocution, although not in the circumstances of a novel. It would be nice, all the same, to hear him some time in his own defence.

DAVID PANNICK

Judicial Review of the Death Penalty
245pp. Duckworth. £18.
0 7136 1594 7

Frank Coppola, executed in Richmond, Virginia, on August 11, 1982, at his own request, four years after his conviction on a capital charge, was first a beneficiary and then a victim of the protracted processes of American justice. A phrase of Alistair Cooke's sticks in the mind – "The long trail to the Supreme Court, that grievous distance from the wound to the hospital, that makes judicial review so cruel a kindness". The compatibility of the execution process with constitutional guarantees is in the hands of judicial decision. David Pannick has written a fine passionate book to assert that most of the world's superior courts have given the wrong answer. The fault, he holds, lies partly in mistaken notions of the judicial process. So the book is both about death and judging.

English readers may of course think it peculiar that in so many countries judges rather than the legislature (let alone the electorate) have the last word in deciding whether it is a good or morally permissible thing to put citizens to death. In Britain the legislature has decided that it is not a good thing for the ordinary run of homicidal criminals, though allowable in the case of those unlucky enough to be detected in the course of piracy, violating royal consorts and elder daughters, or setting fire to Her Majesty's ships and dockyards.

But our constitution is an odd one. In the United States and elsewhere such ethical fine-tuning falls to the courts. There the justices of the various State and Supreme Courts have had to decide whether the death penalty in its various forms violates the constitutional guarantees of due process and equal protection, or the ban on imposition of cruel or unusual punishments. Similar questions arise in a large number of jurisdictions – for example in Canada, India, Japan, Pakistan, Cyprus and Singapore. In one place and another the death penalty has been imposed, even in recent times, for a surprising variety of activities. Haiti apparently punishes with death "communist activities of any kind". Cuba has a capital penalty for setting fire to sugar plantations. Zanzibar imposed it for smuggling doves. In Somalia it seems to have figured as a novel form of constitutional instrument, being decreed as the penalty for opposing a statute giving rights to women. Most moralists and even many lawyers would in these cases see moral and constitutional objections to the death penalty. But can it ever be justified in a community which has enacted protections for the rights of its citizens, including a guarantee of their rights to life and liberty? The author has made a resourceful and wide-ranging collection of the arguments used to establish that in some or all cases it cannot.

Judges who use these arguments seem to fall into two categories. First there are those who believe that the rights guaranteed by the constitution make the death penalty wrong and unlawful in itself and in all cases. Secondly there are some who say that it becomes unconstitutional if applied in a certain manner so as to violate procedural canons of equity, predictability or proportionality. In between there may be a third group whose notions of what constitutes inequity, caprice or predictability are such that any actual legal system will be found to fail to comply with them.

On the face of it the second position seems the most plausible. Bills of Rights, even in the United States, do not profess to say that life, liberty and property are never in any circumstances to be taken away. They often say – as in the fifth and fourteenth amendments to the US federal constitution – that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law. That, if it has any meaning at all, means that there are at least some circumstances in

which property or liberty or life may be taken, provided that certain conditions are met. Those who believe in the United States that the death penalty is *per se* unconstitutional must believe one of three things: that the Founding Fathers did not mean what they said; or that the due process conditions never can be met; or that what the drafters of the constitution said may be ignored. It is noticeable that some American liberals, including some judges, who are eager to give absolute and literal effect to the original intention of the constitution in matters such as free speech are inconstant in their sympathy for the Founding Fathers' views on property, equality or crime.

The notion of "due process of law" has certainly expanded in the United States. Besides procedural fairness it now embraces what Mr Justice Frankfurter called "the canons of decency and fairness which express the notions of justice of English-speaking people". So if a majority of the Supreme Court come to believe (which they have not yet) that the taking of a criminal's life for any offence and under any procedure in itself offends basic canons of justice then the way would be open for them to hold the death penalty unconstitutional *per se* as a violation of the due process clause. Elsewhere, however, the American sense of due process has been held in some suspicion because of its capacity for turning judges into censors of the wisdom of the legislative policy. Constitution-makers have said, for example that life or liberty might not be taken away "except in accordance with law", or "except in accordance with procedure established by law". In view of the history of the adoption of these clauses, attempts to import those full-blown American due process requirements into them in India, Japan and Singapore involve tortured and implausible arguments. Where a constitution places other limitations on the legislature however it can be said that the word "law" may at least have to be understood to include them. This brings us to the various procedural vices that may undermine the validity of a death penalty that is in principle permissible.

In the United States, since the landmark decision in *Furman v. Georgia* in 1972, a number of States have enacted death penalty statutes and some of them have been tested against the due process, equal rights and eighth amendment requirements on cruel and unusual punishments. From this process it has emerged that such statutes may be unconstitutional if they involve elements of caprice, cruelty, unpredictability, disproportionality or improper discrimination. Here of course what is important are the subsidiary tests and arguments used to bring penal laws within one or other of these categories. Some of them are appealing, and others less so. A legislature, at any rate, is faced with a difficult job if it wants to preserve its traditional gallows or gas chamber. There are formidable amounts of penological theory and forensic ingenuity to overcome. In the first place the law must avoid giving the judge or jury an unstructured discretion to impose the death penalty, since its outcome will be unpredictable. On the other hand it must not make the death penalty mandatory since that may make jurors manipulate the legal process to avoid imposing the penalty and the result will still be unpredictable. State legislatures have tried to meet these difficulties by listing aggravating and mitigating factors that might indicate the circumstances in which the death penalty might be imposed. But some judges have suggested that such lists would provide no protection against juries that were determined to decide in accordance with whim or caprice. (Is jury trial compatible with due process?)

Attempts to structure discretion are, it is urged, only cosmetic. Even if a jury does its duty and avoids all caprice, unforeseeable elements of it may enter at an earlier and later stage in the prosecution process, and discretion as to the later exercise of legislative clemency. Mercy is not a safeguard but a further source of potential caprice in

Due taking of life

Geoffrey Marshall

the capital penal process. A legislature is not permitted to remove uncertainty by confining the death penalty to all crimes of a certain kind or to say there can be no mitigating circumstances in certain types of case. It is urged that a mandatory death penalty can serve no rational legislative purpose since there are always differences between one killer and another (eg between Lee Harvey Oswald, killer of Kennedy, and Jack Ruby, killer of Oswald). Indeed, it begins to look as if a legislature is not permitted to do anything or prescribe anything at all that will deprive a defendant of the opportunity of arguing that his rights have been violated by the uncertainty of the criminal process.

Further considerations may be deployed if need be about the discriminatory impact of other social factors. However far the legal regime, the poor still cannot exploit its opportunities as effectively as the rich, so the equal protection of the laws may be in danger. In some judicial opinions the poor are coupled with minorities generally and both with the wider category of those holding unpopular beliefs. "The gallows swallow, in most cases, the social dissenter, the political protester, the poor and the under privileged, the member of minority

groups..." Even the supposed virtues of the Anglo-American common-law system underline its inadequacy. If a defendant prolongs the process between conviction and execution by using all the opportunities for appeal and delay that he and his legal representatives are entitled to employ, the fact that the sentence is delayed itself makes the penal process cruel, if not in the normal sense unusual. A convicted defendant should not be deterred from invoking his legal remedies by the thought that he might have to give up his right to plead the Eighth Amendment, even if that threat did not deter him from his crime in the first place. It is widely supposed that capital punishment is not a deterrent of an effective sort anyway. Certainly a large number of convicted defendants in the United States are not deterred from delaying the carrying out of sentences for long periods. This provides an additional argument of a statistical character. Since it is an established fact that large numbers of homicides occur and since (for the reasons mentioned) only a very few executions take place, any given convicted killer cannot accurately predict whether he will be among the small, either unlucky or justifiably ineffective, number who at some point

will find their sentences being carried out. This disabling uncertainty is inconsistent with the law that provides for his punishment being lawful, constitutional, equal, proportionate, normal or kind.

Having described and displayed these arguments with such clarity, Pannick must face a question on the wider thesis about law and adjudication in which he embeds his argument. In his introduction and conclusion he rejects the thesis that in "hard cases" there can be any right answers. Though some legal philosophers and many judges have proceeded on that assumption, it is, he argues, an error – "the erroneous premise on which the Anglo-American legal system is based". Yet in the body of his book he has set out a case that will persuade many to the conclusion that the right answer to the question whether the death penalty is compatible with the rule of law and individual rights is that it is not. So, paradoxically, there will be a number of readers who took up the book in sympathy with its theory of law but sceptical about the unlawfulness of the death penalty. Some of them will put it down convinced opponents of capital punishment but with their jurisprudential convictions badly shaken.



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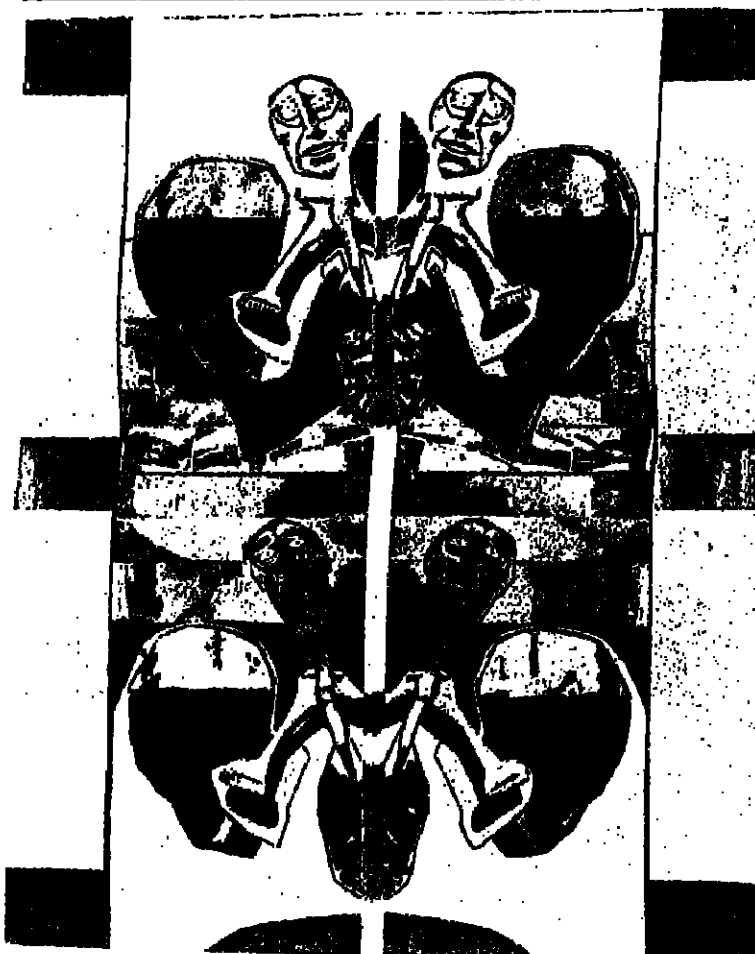


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commentary



"Acido Simetrico", 1980, by Luis Gordillo, from the exhibition New Spanish Figurative which transfers on August 27 from Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, to the ICA, London.

Author, Author

Competition No 84
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than September 10. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 84" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on September 17.

1 He knew the hotel to be antiquated but this was overdoing it. The *belle chambre au quatrième*, although too large for one guest and too cramped for a group, lacked every kind of comfort. He remembered that the lower room where he, a big man of thirty-two, had cried more often and more bitterly than he ever had in his sad childhood, had been sprawling and cluttered as his new abode. Its bed was a nightmare. Its "bathroom" contained a bidet (ample enough to accommodate a circus elephant, sitting) but no bath. The toilet seat refused to stay up.

2 I own my first sensations, as soon as I was left solitary and alone in my own chamber, in the hotel, were far from being so flattering as I had prefigured them. I walked up gravely to the window in my dusty black coat, and looking through the glass saw all the world in yellow, blue, and green, running at the ring of pleasure. The old with broken lances, and in helmets which had lost their viziers, the young in armour bright which shone like gold, he-plumed with each gay feather of the east, all – all – tilting. It like fascinated knights in tournaments of yore for fame and love.

3 The hotel occupies an attractive and isolated site overlooking the famous lake. It is said to be the deepest lake in the world. In fact, either it is an ordinary large blue lake or something beyond description. If these travel notes are to be effective, and useful I must make up my mind about such things, and fairly soon. The manager's living son obeyed this proverb to me over

breakfast: the people of the capital know the Famous Lake better than the people of The Famous Lake (town about five miles across from the hotel) – which may not be clear to the armchair visitor, unless he understands that the lake went dry the year the hotel was built, drunk up (as water supply) by the thirsty citizens of the capital.

Competition No 80
Winner: Alistair Elliot
Answers:

1 Marriage is a step so grave and decisive that it attracts light-headed, variable men by its very awfulness.
R. L. Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque*.

2 I love you the more in that I believe you have liked me for my own sake and for nothing else – I have met with women whom I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel.

J. Keats, letter to Fanny Brawne, July 25, 1819.
3 You can hardly imagine that I and Lord B – would dream of allowing our only daughter – a girl brought up with the utmost care – to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel.
Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

TLS Crossword

As announced last week, we hope to run a literary crossword from time to time in the TLS, and to find setters who might be prepared to set such a crossword at regular intervals. Readers are invited to submit puzzles for possible inclusion, and a prize of one year's subscription to the TLS is offered for the best three submitted by September 17. They should be in *The Times* Crossword format: 15 x 15, symmetrical, no word to have more than half its letters blind or to start with two blind letters or to have three consecutive blind letters, all words to be connected to at least two others. All clues should have some literary bearing. Entries (no more than two per person) with clues in duplicate and answers on the second set, and explanations of literary references, should be sent to TLS Crossword, *Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

Nude voodoo

Frank Tuohy

Macunaima
Riverside Studios

O Grupo de Teatro Macunaima has returned to London and is performing the extraordinarily successful show from which it took its name. The presenters suggest, without entire justification, that an audience with no knowledge of Portuguese can enjoy the action. This certainly seemed true on the first night. But such an audience is bound to lose a good deal of what makes *Macunaima* a more coherent and considered operation than the brilliant hurly-burly on stage might suggest. Fortunately a sizable national contingent had come along and was ready to enjoy the local references, the knocking of shibboleths, the music-hall obscenities and puns. The novel by Mario de Andrade from which the show is adapted is an exercise in verbal fireworks, a less dour effort than the programme suggests, and a good deal of that quality comes through on stage, together with a sort of popular poetry, for which there is no English equivalent but which is similar to the work of Jacques Prévert in France.

Mario de Andrade was a leader in the movement to modernism which arrived somewhat tardily in Brazil; the equivalent of the pre-1914 Armory Show in New York or the London Post-Impressionist Exhibition was the *Semana de Arte Moderna* held in São Paulo in 1922. Mario de Andrade read his poems, was ritually howled down, and wrote a manifesto praising popular tradition and calling for a literary language "without archaism or erudition, natural and neologistic". A few years later, *Macunaima* mingles myth and the modern world, a strategy recommended by Joyce and Eliot but in this case probably deriving from Cocteau.

The whole movement in fact was

produced by a rich, French-speaking élite, spending much of its time in Paris, though perhaps stimulated by foreign travellers: Isadora Duncan and Diaghilev both turned up. Paul Claudel was at the Embassy in Rio. Darius Milhaud made arrangements of popular music and the novelist Blaise Cendrars paid almost yearly visits, though his Brazilian confrères found his pursuit of the exotic rather offensive – Europeans tended to think the Indian and Black cultures more interesting than the laboured sophistication of the ruling class. Mario de Andrade probably knew as much about Macunaima and his tribe as Longfellow did about Hiawatha. Claude Lévi-Strauss and the other anthropologists arrived in São Paulo some years later.

By then, the bounce and zest of the original movement had fizzled out. Andrade died in 1945 and in the following years the survivors of modernism, still in their grand houses with their servants in white gloves, had mostly become Stalinists. The Grupo de Teatro Macunaima, together with some recent films like *Bye Bye Brasil*, a great success in New York last year, show a refreshing absence of ideology and a return to aesthetic excitement. They indicate recent evolution towards a distinct national character, though perhaps not the "permanent" psychic structure Andrade hoped for.

The producers, too, have kept a sense of historical perspective. Macunaima himself is a sort of Till Eulenspiegel, randy, clever, too lazy to live. His adventures begin in the jungle, where the forces of evil wear the plastic visors, rubber boots and overalls of the exploiters who are destroying the rain forests today. When with his brothers he arrives in São Paulo, we are back in the early years of the century: French-tarts, Italian boarding-house keepers whose menfolk spend the day in pyjamas, the crippled giant Piama disguised as a capitalist millionaire in silk hat and opera cloak, his daughters with frilly

dress and skipping ropes. Carnival Rio, with its grinning transvestites, brings us back to modern times. The production brilliantly establishes conventions of its own: endless sheets of newspaper represent food, money; to sinister effect the disguise fabulous monsters. A big white sheet takes on a life of its own, seeming to represent the features of the natural world. But the most impressive convention – I believe it has caused problems back home – is the use of nudity. Cocteau remarked that a real horse on the stage looks like a mythological beast; stage horses should be lath and paper (Kabuki in Japan agrees with this). Up to now, nudes in the theatre have looked legendary in this way – in Gropius they seemed more naked. *Macunaima* total nudity represents goddesses, spirits and works of art: the golden breasts of the sun goddess make her an Olympian figure and the six Uaiara rises magnificently from her lake. In the city the whores, French and Portuguese, are fully clothed to keep their hats on, while the millionaire's statues, shepherded by an epicure creature out of Beaudouin, provide a thrilling image of decadent art.

Another leap forward is the abandonment of what Brazilians call "folclórico" – all those ethnic costumes and music in which the country is so rich. In the past, shows going abroad relied heavily on fancy dancers, usually black, recruited from the slums of the major cities; they did their own thing and never learned anything else. Here popular music plays a small part through the waltz ceremony, which is fairly realistic, a part of the narrative. The amazing versatility and talented cast – and the names in the programme – show that the ethnic phase is over. In Brazil, unlike America, the contents of the melting pot have really melted. This, though, is merely a single factor among all those that make one feel immensely cheerful about this group and their season at Riverside Studios.

artists found their style easily transportable and even Innes's Welsh mountains are sometimes indistinguishable from his paintings of the Pyrenees. These small, intimate pochades in which local colour is given the brilliance of stained glass, are much of their vitality from the freedom which these artists enjoyed. John especially, at this time caught in an uneasy relationship with his patron, John Quinn, relished the nomadic life. This exhibition celebrates that side of him which produced the head and shoulders of Dorella, her face beauty pressing through the moonlight and uninflected paintwork. Opposite, almost as if by another hand, hangs John's exaggeratedly nonchalant and flamboyant portrait of Lady Howard de Walden whose hospitality he and Lees enjoyed at Chirk Castle.

As with other visionary styles, this sudden lyric outpouring was brief. In the winter of 1913-14 Innes moved to Morocco and then the Canary Isles for a rest cure and spent the end of his life experimenting with different combinations of tobacco. Though less known about Lees, within a few years he was unable to paint any more. John, meanwhile, was reverting to the large-scale multi-figure compositions which he had admired by his patrons. It didn't need war to destroy this colter of the imagination, it came from his medicine.

The exhibition will subsequently be shown at the Ortel Gallery, 22, from October 30 to November 27, and at the Graves Art Gallery, Shaftesbury, from December 4 to January 2, 1983.

The Arts Council of Great Britain is preparing a retrospective exhibition of paintings by Sir Lawrence Lees, which would be grateful to John and Lees, and would be grateful to the owners of his works. Please contact the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington, London W2 2X.

Lewis Carroll and his American readers

Morton N. Cohen

How curious that we Americans take to Lewis Carroll the way we do. The *Alice* books are, after all, quintessentially English, and Charles Dodgson was himself one of those carefully cultivated Englishmen who flourish to this day only in Oxbridge. As a matter of fact, Dodgson did not think much of Americans. When, in 1865, he decided to scrap the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, he had to choose between turning the unsatisfactory copies into waste paper or having them shipped to the United States to be sold there. He chose the latter. Americans thought to be very particular as to quality – he explained twenty years later when, in the preface to *The Game of Logic*, he condemned them to the same fate.

In the summer of 1880, when he was at Eastbourne for his usual summer holiday, he encountered on the beach a new little friend, Lily Alice Godfrey, from New York; aged eight; but talked like a girl of fifteen or sixteen, and destined to be kissed on wishing goodbye, on the ground that she "never kissed gentlemen". It is rather painful, Dodgson commented, "to see the lovely simplicity of childhood so soon rubbed off; but I fear it is true that there are no children in America."

Even though Dodgson never embraced his American cousins, they have gobbled him and his books up as the Walrus and the Carpenter did the oysters, and they have proved, during this 150th birthday year, that his Stateside popularity has, if anything, increased with time. American celebrations marking Dodgson's sesquicentennial began early. Last November St John's University in Minnesota jumped the gun with a two-day Lewis Carroll Festival. University faculty, students, and a few invited specialists participated in a round robin of receptions, seminars, workshops and discussion groups on Dodgson's accomplishments in mathematics, storytelling, photography, and tutoring.

One would expect New York to

make itself the centre of the American celebrations, and it certainly did. Mayor Edward I. Koch declared the day of Dodgson's birth, January 27, Lewis Carroll Day. His witty proclamation was read at a press conference by the city's Parks Commissioner, an appropriate choice because the bronze sculpture of Alice and her fellow-creatures in Wonderland, rubbed to a high sheen by children climbing up and sliding down its sides, graces Central Park.

Fifth Avenue bookshops and department stores devoted windows to Lewis Carroll; radio programmes and television networks offered moments of whimsical invention all their own; and at least two publishing houses staged Mad Hatter Tea Parties in support of Carroll books they had published. The biggest celebration of all took place at the Pierpont Morgan Library. Marking its own seventy-fifth anniversary, the Morgan could be doubly jubilant, for it had recently acquired the superb Arthur A. Houghton Jr collection of Carroll material, and it would go on display for the first time.

The exhibition opened on the birthday to the whirring of cameras and a long and patient line of Carroll fans that stretched along East 36th Street and up Madison Avenue. In terms of Carroll memorabilia, the exhibition was a blockbuster, offering a closer

view of Dodgson the man and Alice Liddell the girl and woman than any exhibition had done before.

In one showcase was Dodgson's prayer book, given to him by his aunt and godmother when he was seven; the Bible his parents gave him as a boy of thirteen; and his Shakespeare with his own index to the plays written in the famous purple ink. In another case were his microscope, with his initials painted in black on the cover and the warning: "Glass, with care"; and his silver watch, engraved inside the back lid: "Rev. C. L. Dodgson, Christ Church."

In yet another case was Alice's own portable writing desk; a ruby ring she owned as a child; a birthday letter she wrote to her father when she was ten; her leather purse with "Alice" embroidered on the front; the *Looking-Glass* biscuit tin that Dodgson gave her; and the photograph he took of her dressed as a beggar child. First editions of Carroll works crammed other cases, as did original letters, illustrations, and rare photographs of and by Dodgson. In the centre case was propped the only surviving manuscript of the *Alice* stories, on loan from the British Library. A 133-page catalogue was available, a nontime introductory lecture was offered to the public, three more specialized lectures were given in the course of the exhibition, and Michael Rothwell came over from

England to give three performances of the one-man show on Lewis Carroll that he had earlier presented at the Bristol Old Vic and the Mermaid Theatre.

By April 18, when the exhibition closed, more than fifty thousand people had passed through the Morgan doors to see the display, an astonishing number when one considers that the Library, with all its fine exhibitions, normally draws between one and two hundred thousand viewers a year.

Other celebrations mushroomed. A number of new publications appeared, including an expensive *Alice* with new illustrations; a volume of original essays on Carroll entitled *Lewis Carroll: A Celebration*, another containing a list of the books known to have been in Carroll's own library; and a large volume containing *The Hunting of the Snark* and almost everything known about the poem. In the middle of June, an impressionistic play about Dodgson's life called *Looking-Glass* opened in New York, and in October Eva Le Gallienne will play the White Queen on Broadway in her own 1932 adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*. Also in the autumn the paperback edition of *The Selected Letters of Lewis Carroll* will appear, and an issue of *English Language Notes* will be devoted entirely to Carroll studies.

What is the meaning of all this attachment to Carroll on the other side of the Atlantic? "If there's no meaning in it," said the King, "that saves a world of trouble, you know. . . . And yet I don't know," he went on. . . . "I seem to see some meaning . . . after all." The meaning is that Americans enjoy the *Alice* books for the same reasons that most people do. They are fascinated by Dodgson's strange, almost mystical insight into the child's heart and mind and by his ability to let us share once again with him and with Alice herself the delights, the dreams, and the horrors of childhood. If anyone needed further evidence, he had only to look at the cover of the Swahili translation of *Alice* that was on display at the Morgan. It showed a drawing of a black Alice looking up at the Cheshire Cat. Dodgson knew that the joys and the yearnings of childhood were universal.



An emine tea-party by the taxidermist Ploucquet of Stuttgart, one of 518 illustrations in *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design, Victorian and After* by Nikolaus Pevsner (288pp. Thames and Hudson. £7.50. 0 500 27256 5). First published in 1968, this pioneering collection of essays has now been reissued in paperback.

A museum and its city

N. S. Thompson

The Uffizi: Four Centuries of a Gallery
Florence

The Quatercentenary of the Uffizi has brought more than the expected celebrations and exhibitions. It has posed the fundamental question of Florence's future: what it should do with its museums and what it should do with itself as a unique "city-museum". These questions are bound up with the new thinking about the role of the museum in the cultural landscape, which is that it should be both a "centre" and also a "producer" of culture. On the one hand, we have the care and conservation of the past, and on the other, research, which can bring about new critical ideas, and education, which takes the museum out to the public. The Uffizi has had an Education Department for the past ten years, but the real growth in activities has been in the last five. A four-part series of public lectures and meetings, together with special school visits, was a major initiative held earlier in the year to explain the Gallery's collections and its history for the Florentine public.

For the wider public, there are three main exhibitions: two in the Palazzo Vecchio, on the Florentine museums and on the restoration of art works, and one in the Uffizi itself, of twentieth-century self-portraits. It also shows minor exhibitions on its architectural history and on the conservation and restoration of works of art on paper in the Gabinetto

Disegni. Rightly, the Gallery is there to be seen as usual; it is its own monument, but its rooms have been extensively restructured, greatly enhancing the experience of viewing.

The Uffizi's history goes back to 1560 when Duke Cosimo I de' Medici commissioned Vasari to design his administrative offices (*uffizi*), which were completed twenty years later by the architects Parigi and Buontalenti. In 1581, Francesco I started a museum on the second floor, where the Gallery is still located, with the brief of "in questo consorzio sceltissimo". A later Medici, Cardinal Leopoldo, one of the first really systematic collectors, began a collection of self-portraits in 1664, which grew and came to be hung in the Vasari Corridor. Thus the collection of this relatively modern genre – it originates in the Renaissance itself – inspired the idea of soliciting and mounting an exhibition of twentieth-century self-portraits as the Uffizi's special celebration of itself.

Contributions came from all over the world, ranging from a simple pen-and-ink sketch by André Masson to the X-ray photo-collage by Rauschenberg, although the most notable works are oils by Chagall, Guttuso, Manzù, Morandi, Rosai and Siquieros.

The Palazzo Vecchio, too, has undergone a face-lift and structural overhaul for this year. *City of the Uffizi*, in the Salone dei Cinquecento, is a comprehensive display of exhibits from all of Florence's twenty museums and galleries, each with its own stand and documentary material. The aim is to show that the Uffizi Gallery was only a part of a far wider interest in both the arts and sciences, fostered and stimulated by the Medici and the later

Grand Dukes. The wealth of Florence's museums of science and natural history is relatively unknown, but they are among the oldest in the world, second only to those in Pisa. One can see early scientific instruments such as the first thermometers, navigating instruments, an early calculating machine, a first edition of Galileo's *Works* and many scientific manuscripts as well as early anthropological and botanical collections. The archaeological museums are well represented by, among other things, the only known Etruscan bronze of the Late Hellenistic Age, the "Haranguer", which has belonged to Grand Ducal collections since 1566.

A revealing section of this complex exhibition is entitled "The Politics of Restoration in Florence", an attempt to draw attention to the numerous works of art which are not only gathering dust in deposits and vaults, but which are also badly in need of repair. Some of these wretched specimens, together with tragic photographs of past storage conditions, are on display beside glowingly restored works and others which are in the process of restoration. Full information is given about all the museums and their exhibits, with an English language translation.

The *Method and Science* exhibition is devoted to the restoration of works in every kind of medium; the results, particularly with regard to major works, are totally satisfying. *Annunziata* by Hercules and *Antem* from the fountain at the Villa di Castello, has undergone the same treatment for the resuscitation of water-based deposits as the Bronzes of

Riace. The verdigris patina has been preserved in the final cleaning and polishing; the mixture of age and success is very successful. A far more difficult task was the restoration of the ravaged Luca della Robbia lunette, "Madonna and Child, with Saints", from Urbino, which has been beautifully pieced together, with the addition of a new head for the Madonna. One also has the opportunity to see Donatello's "Judith and Holofernes" close to, and to see the famous spot where he used jute sacking in the moulding.

The showpiece of the whole exhibition is the newly restored "Primavera" by Botticelli. It was feared that the brown tones it had acquired were caused by a permanent chemical change in the greens used. However, after a battery of scientific tests, this was discovered not to be the case. It was simply dirt. Now the richness of the colours, the botanical detail of the carpet of flowers and the delicacy and texture of the clothing are brilliantly clear. More interestingly, it appears that the little grove where the figures stand or dance is a knoll surrounded by a hilly landscape, which nestles under the clear blue sky, now visible through the trees.

All the exhibitions will continue to the end of the year. In September there will be an International Study Conference on the Uffizi, and a new photographic exhibition *The Image of the Uffizi*. A "Project Florence" has also been initiated, first to make an appraisal of resources – well under way – and then to execute a comprehensive plan of restoration, according to which an entire overhaul of the "city-museum" complex should be complete by 1986, so marking the start of its new life as a "city-museum" complex.

New Oxford books: Literature

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Three Stories

Daisy and Angela Ashford
Illustrated by
Ralph Steadman with
a new introduction
by Humphrey Carpenter

The Young Visitors, written when Daisy Ashford was nine, was an instant bestseller and has continued to delight generations of readers. Daisy and her sister Angela wrote other hilarious stories, and this volume contains three of their best. Like *The Young Visitors* they deal with love, marriage, and the social foibles of the adult world, and are written with the same charm and mordant perception. £1.95
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The Priest
George Borrow

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Richard Jefferies' last essays have all the beauty and freshness of his earlier writing, and this keenness of observation. But they also have a greater poignancy stemming from his longing to "drink the wind" when he could only watch the birds from his window during his years of painful illness, and from his loneliness. £2.95
Oxford Paperbacks

Oxford
University Press

John Coombe

Rendition of the rock

Christopher Thorne

ERIC MORRIS

Corregidor: The Nightmare in the Philippines

528pp. Hutchinson. £12.95.
0 09 14960 0

This study of the retreat, resistance and eventual surrender of American forces in the Philippines between December 1941 and May 1942 is based, as Eric Morris makes clear at the outset, "almost exclusively" on interviews with survivors. In other words, he has chosen not to make use of the extensive documentary material available in the United States and elsewhere. He has been to look over the ground in Corregidor, but not, for example, to the archives centre at Churchill College, Cambridge, where there are kept the papers of the British businessman in the Philippines who was ordered into uniform by London so as to act as liaison officer with General MacArthur, the American commander. Even the interviews themselves number only forty, so that the book is mostly taken up with incidents involving a very small minority of defenders and civilians. The picture is not a very good one. The pace of the study is one of rapid switches from one close-up to another, and the distinguishing heading given to each brief, retrospective survey of the overall situation: "April 1980. Department of War Studies and International Affairs, Sandhurst, England" has a pretentious look about it, as well as being unnecessary.

Nevertheless, *Corregidor* is a worthwhile book. It vividly conveys, for example, the circumstances of men fighting hunger, dysentery and malaria, as well as the ever-present Japanese; the effects upon troops and civilians penned within the confines of the island and tunnels of Corregidor (nearly 15,000 people in a rock at the entrance to Manila Bay three-and-a-quarter miles long by just over a mile at its widest point) of massive and sustained bombardment; the wide variations of behaviour among units and individuals as it became apparent that for all the rhetoric issuing from Washington, no relieving force was going to arrive.

The first stage in the inevitable surrender had already taken place on the Bataan peninsula. Involving something like 76,000 men (12,000 of them Americans, the remainder Filipinos), it was the first occasion on which an army of the Republic on the field of battle had to adopt such a course, and Morris rightly praises the courage of Major-General Edward King who, in marked contrast to his superiors, faced up to the need to take a decision that was bound to bring discredit on the head of whoever made it. If the fall of Singapore was a body-blow to the British Empire, the defeat in the Philippines, together with the ensuing "Bataan death-march" of Japan's new prisoners, coming as they did on top of Pearl Harbor, ensured that for the majority of Americans the Second World War was above all else a struggle to wreak vengeance on Japan.

There were, indeed, a number of similarities involved between the Singapore and Philippines episodes. Most Americans in the islands before the war had led a pampered existence, well removed from that of the great majority of the native peoples. Many could not bring themselves to face up to the growing likelihood that their privileged world was about to be swept away by the tide of war. Meanwhile, errors in the preparation of defences locally as well as the strategic priorities adopted by Washington helped ensure that even the most valiant military resistance to an invader would ultimately prove unavailing.

In the event, the behaviour of some elements of the US and the Philippine armies in the face of the Japanese assault was less than resolute. As for MacArthur—and here, the testimony of some of those Morris has interviewed, interesting though it is, merely reinforces the evidence put forward in William Manchester's *American Caesar* and elsewhere—his performance, too, was seriously

flawed. He had remained convinced until the last moment that the Japanese would not attack before the spring of 1942, and his preparations within the islands were based on a misplaced conviction that he could hold Luzon should that attack come. During the campaign itself, including its latter stages when, on Roosevelt's orders, he had left Corregidor for Australia, he manifested those egocentric, histrionic and devious characteristics that marked his entire career.

There remain, however, a good many items to be placed on the credit side of the ledger, as Morris rightly emphasizes. For all his weaknesses, MacArthur was a formidable general, and in the manoeuvres that enabled a defensive position to be established on Bataan he, his subordinate commanders and the men they led conducted a fighting retreat of remarkable proportions. The relationship between the Philippines and the United States tended to be over-idealized by American politicians (in order to sustain the central myth, Washington pre-emptively squashed President Manuel Quezon's desire, as the Japanese closed in, to switch to an independent and neutral position), but amidst the horrors and confusion of the fighting large numbers of Filipino troops did remain loyal.

Above all, the extent of the military resistance offered to the Japanese on Bataan under appalling conditions was significantly greater than that in

Malaya and Singapore. It is not, of course, a comparison that can be made without taking into account a number of contextual considerations: for example, there was no equivalent on Bataan to the roads that ran down the Malay peninsula and facilitated the Japanese advance there; nor did the American commanders on Bataan and Corregidor have to consider the consequences, in fighting on, for a civilian population of the size that encumbered General Percival in Singapore. (Manila had already been declared an open city.) Nevertheless, the defenders of Bataan in particular had achieved before they surrendered a great deal more in the way of inflicting setbacks and frustrations upon the enemy than had the forces under Percival's command.

Corregidor contains a great deal of material on one further aspect of the war in South-East Asia that cannot be put aside. Eric Morris makes clear his position on the matter when he refers to the achievements of the Americans and Filipinos "against a bestial foe". For those of us who study the history of the Far Eastern war, even more, perhaps, than for the nations as a whole which fought the Japanese between 1937 and 1945, it is essential that the hatreds and propaganda of those years should be left behind. But the atrocities committed during the conflict by a substantial number of the Japanese military were of such an order and such an extent that the stain is beyond erasing.

Pledges between partners

James Kirkup

IHARA SAIKAKU

Tales of Samurai Honor

Translated by Caryl Ann Callahan
156pp. Monumenta Nipponica,
Sophia University, Tokyo. Yen 900/\$4.

In the seventeenth-century Japan of the renowned novelist Ihara Saikaku, one of the giants of classical Japanese literature, homosexuality was rife, and, though officially frowned upon, was tolerated, and indeed in the case of kabuki actors and samurai was openly acknowledged and accepted, as were sexual relations between powerful lords and their adolescent pages. So it was natural that Saikaku, in his wealth of tales about merchants and city-dwellers in the Edo Period, should write many stories of homoerotic passion. The stories in *Tales of Samurai Honor* are not pornographic: their power derives not so much from the scenes and sexual acts they depict, but from their delightful style, with that saving grace of wit and humour and fantasy that pornography usually lacks.

Caryl Ann Callahan, in her interesting introduction to this good translation—a vast improvement on that on top of Pearl Harbor, ensured that for the majority of Americans the Second World War was above all else a struggle to wreak vengeance on Japan.

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There remain, however, a good many items to be placed on the credit side of the ledger, as Morris rightly emphasizes. For all his weaknesses, MacArthur was a formidable general, and in the manoeuvres that enabled a defensive position to be established on Bataan he, his subordinate commanders and the men they led conducted a fighting retreat of remarkable proportions. The relationship between the Philippines and the United States tended to be over-idealized by American politicians (in order to sustain the central myth, Washington pre-emptively squashed President Manuel Quezon's desire, as the Japanese closed in, to switch to an independent and neutral position), but amidst the horrors and confusion of the fighting large numbers of Filipino troops did remain loyal.

Above all, the extent of the military resistance offered to the Japanese on Bataan under appalling conditions was significantly greater than that in

Malaya and Singapore. It is not, of course, a comparison that can be made without taking into account a number of contextual considerations: for example, there was no equivalent on Bataan to the roads that ran down the Malay peninsula and facilitated the Japanese advance there; nor did the American commanders on Bataan and Corregidor have to consider the consequences, in fighting on, for a civilian population of the size that encumbered General Percival in Singapore. (Manila had already been declared an open city.) Nevertheless, the defenders of Bataan in particular had achieved before they surrendered a great deal more in the way of inflicting setbacks and frustrations upon the enemy than had the forces under Percival's command.

Corregidor contains a great deal of material on one further aspect of the war in South-East Asia that cannot be put aside. Eric Morris makes clear his position on the matter when he refers to the achievements of the Americans and Filipinos "against a bestial foe". For those of us who study the history of the Far Eastern war, even more, perhaps, than for the nations as a whole which fought the Japanese between 1937 and 1945, it is essential that the hatreds and propaganda of those years should be left behind. But the atrocities committed during the conflict by a substantial number of the Japanese military were of such an order and such an extent that the stain is beyond erasing.

Stretching clothes-lines

Wolf Mendl

DICK WILSON

When Tigers Fight: The Story of the Sino-Japanese War 1937-45

286pp. Hutchinson. £10.95.
0 09 145710 6

This book will no doubt delight those who like reading about battles and campaigns and who enjoy setting up sand-tables and playing war-games. The publisher's blurb refers to the Sino-Japanese War as "the bloodiest and cruellest war ever to be fought between two nations" and we are warned that the book "will shock those unprepared for oriental violence in war". It is a relief to know that the author does not make such silly claims in his chronological and lucid account of the main Japanese and Chinese operations from the Marco Polo Bridge "incident" to Japan's surrender.

Dick Wilson has tried to fill a gap left by Western authors who have tended to concentrate on the diplomatic and political aspects of the war and its economic and social effects, or have regarded it as a side-show of the more spectacular and fateful Pacific War of 1941-45. This, then, is a straightforward military history of the war, illustrated with many maps.

The narrative is skilfully interwoven with anecdotes and extensive quotations from contemporary writings. As a first-class journalist, Wilson does not rely exclusively on official histories, the memoirs of the leading figures in the drama and of the many foreigners who left a record of their experiences and impressions. He draws liberally on the recollections and diaries of the humblest participants on both sides. It is the poignant joining of the junior officers and privates who convey the sense of futility and misery of the struggle. "Fighting and dead everywhere and now I am alone wounded. China is limitless and we are like drops of water in an ocean. There is no purpose in this war and I shall never see my home again," thus wrote a Japanese soldier on the wall of his barracks.

The apparent pointlessness of it all may have led Wilson to conclude that the war was a "one-off phenomenon," a tragic and wasteful episode which did no good to anyone and which "achieved nothing".

But was this so? Indeed, the author himself suggests that some of the consequences of the war were far-reaching and profoundly significant: it paved the way for China's eventual reunification and emergence as a major power. It turned Japan in the direction of anti-militarism. Wilson exaggerates when he says that a result "even today the Pacific left can still ensure that the Japanese defence forces are wholly inadequate, laughably ill-equipped", but surely no bad thing that they lack "political leverage" and that the Japanese generals they will not trust their generals. Above all, China and Japan are determined never to go to war with each other again and that can only be blessing for both peoples.

The author's rather negative conclusions point to a major problem in this kind of historical narrative. It may have the popular appeal that books on war and atrocities seem to have—it includes plenty of hair-raising details from the rape of Nanking to the less well-known massacre of Japanese at Tongxin in July 1937—but it fails to set war in its proper context.

Military campaigns do not make much sense unless we can relate them to the political objectives they are supposed to serve and to the international and domestic circumstances in which they take place. This apart from some hints that relations between the Chinese Nationalists and Communists were uneasy, the impact of their relationship on the war against Japan is never fully explained. Similarly, there is no adequate account of the rivalries on the Japanese side between the Kwantung Army in Manchuria, the army in North China, and the military authorities in central China, which had a direct bearing on Japanese strategy. Apart from some interesting snippets about the role of foreign advisers on the Chinese side, and the prickly relationship between General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek, the reader is left next to nothing of how the war in China affected international relations. For example, the linkage between Chinese operations in the Burma and Thailand campaigns in central and southern China is well brought out, but there is no mention of the very relevant background of Allied strategic aims in Japan.

Dick Wilson has produced an interesting narrative, but what remains to be written is a context in which the history of the Sino-Japanese war can be seen in its military, diplomatic, economic, and social dimensions. Only then shall we be able to make a proper assessment of its significance.

The Innocent Bystanders

Heil is a place where
Eyeglasses are forbidden, where only nails and hair
Can grow, and dentures kept in glass cases
Sank long ago into the hamburgers of Ohio—the basis
Of the blood we spilled, or was it the ink?
It was, it is, later than we think.

It is, for example, too late to use the sink:
One gulch, echoing through the tenements,
Will wake the innocent bystanders whose very existence
Confirms that somebody is guilty. But who?
Was it the Catholic, the Protestant, or the Jew?
It could be the holder of a worthless I.O.U.

Who spent the day in bed until, forced by the warm
May weather to depart, he set forth in good cheer
In search of a nurse to rub alcohol on his upper arm
Before her love can sting him. The recent and near
Revolution disappears, as a ball of blazing light
Blazes the hands of cheering fans, and lands out of sight.

David Lehman

Wiccamical occasions

Walter Oakeshott

ROGER CUSTANCE (Editor)

Winchester College: Sixth-century
Essays
515pp. Oxford University Press. £20.
0 19 920103 X

At least three of the essays in this remarkable book, which celebrates Winchester College's sixth centenary, are distinguished contributions to English history: Peter Partner's essay on William of Wykeham himself; John Harvey's on the old buildings of the College; A. O. J. Cockshut's on Thomas Arnold, Hooker and Ward, which he modestly calls "a Wiccamical side-light on a thirteenth century religion", but which is really a study, with profound insight, of three writers who had not indeed the saintliness of Newman, but whose different minds and characters illuminate the history of the Church in the second third of the nineteenth century.

Besides belonging to the wider history of England, and of its architecture, the first two of these contributions, at least, have a clear Wiccamical bearing. William of Wykeham was a great administrator and a figure of national importance, but his career was never completed as it might have been, because while he was still comparatively young, the ruling passion of his life became the creation and future endowment of Winchester and New College. He had a deep understanding of what was beautiful as well as of what was necessary; and as an administrator he knew, as the records of his repeated hospitality to craftsmen show, that the way to get the best work done was to keep in constant touch with his workers. Harvey has written almost a month-by-month account of what happened as the College was built. The resources of the Muniment Room at Winchester, which makes this possible, also provide Dick Keene with the material for tracing the history of almost every square foot of College ground before Wykeham acquired it. Those same resources, uniquely including four Anglo-Saxon charters from the New Minster, make it possible for N. P. Brooks to demonstrate conclusively what had been suggested before by T. A. M. Bishop, N. R. Ker, and others, that the "oldest" of these four, recording a grant by Edward the Elder to that monastery, dates back not to the year 900, but to a period more than a century later, when religious institutions began to establish their claims to property or other rights by tracing their history back to the founding documents designed to show that these had been granted much earlier. This particular essay has the special interest that Brooks has followed step by step, almost tree by tree, the boundaries of the land that the Charter specifies: an astonishing performance.

No attempt is made in *Winchester College* to provide a continuous history, but the outstanding scholarship of the articles by Partner, Harvey, Cockshut and Brooks is maintained throughout. Several contributors throw a new and surprising light on the most interesting question of all: the relation between boys, masters, Fellows and Warden. In Wykeham's foundation the Fellows were a small religious community, being prosperously within the precincts, and providing the religious services which were the essence of the institution's life. At the Reformation, they lost the right to conduct those services; and by the eighteenth century they appear for instance in Roger Cusance's essay "Warden Nicholas and the Mutiny at Winchester College" as they had become an anomaly, if not something of a scandal. Cusance's "Mutiny" is a mutiny of the Fellows against the Warden: a quarrel about how the Estate's revenues should be shared. But he also refers to what he calls the first of the Winchester dinners in Hall, on a night when four Fellows happened to be dining, "behaved very insolently by taking up a bottle of beer in his hand and frequently drinking out of the same". In the open view of the said Sub-Warden and Fellows. It appears that in Nicholas's time the Warden was

not above exploiting the boys if they provided him with a stick with which to beat the Fellows. Certainly the Fellows trumpeted their sympathy with the boys, when this enabled them to criticize the Warden.

During the century and a half for which Wykeham's foundation kept the shape he had given it, we gain the impression, formed mainly by the quality of Wykehamists who became public servants or academics, that the boys looked after themselves, within that religious framework, and with an eye on the Statutes. The College produced, as we see in Professor Lytle's contribution, "Wykehamist Culture in Pre-Reformation England", few outstanding figures, but worthy bishops, public servants and scholars. Grocyon is the most interesting of them, because we know most about him. Lytle quotes not only Erasmus's judgment on his abilities and his way of life, but also his charming epigram. Lytle translates it to read:

A snowball white at me did Julia throw;
Who would suppose it? Fire was in that snow.

Julia alone can quench my hot desire,
But not with snow or ice, but equal fire.

In the first 150 years, the religious foundation seems to have worked. What happened in the school in the next 150 is a mystery. We know, from J. P. McGrath's "Winchester College and the Old Religion in the Sixteenth Century", of the deep feelings of "old" Wykehamists, both Protestant and Catholic, in the days of the religious persecutions. The fair copies in a little book of Latin Verses by Harmer, the learned Elizabethan headmaster, give a delightful impression of the relationship between that headmaster and pupils to whom, individually, the banter of most of the verses is addressed. But its voice is unique. There is hardly an echo of it for the next 300 years. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we can learn much of Warden and Fellows and their vicissitudes, but little of the boys; and in particular, I know of nothing to show that they were deeply influenced by the masters, in spite of the impression given by Warton's splendid monument in Winchester Cathedral. The boys remained a self-contained community ruling themselves under the authority of the Wykeham Statutes. One of the most interesting pieces of all in *Winchester College* is Peter Gwyn's discursive article on "The Tundring Row: George Ridding and the belief in Boy-Government"—the phrase incidentally going back to G. Moberly, Ridding's predecessor, who coined it in 1861.

It was men such as these who made the modern Winchester. This was the time when masters began to live their lives within the school, not simply to instruct, but in a way that made Winchester what it was in the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

Half-alien ancestors

Paula Neuss

STEPHEN MEDCALF (Editor)

The Later Middle Ages
3129pp. Methuen. £11.50 (paperback),
£5.95.
0 416 85990 9

The Later Middle Ages is part of Methuen's series "The Context of English Literature". The task of setting the literature of the period c. 1300-1550 "directly in its political, historical and cultural context" and "bridging the gap between modern and medieval language and literature" is a formidable one, and one which the authors of this book have in the main, the probably wisely chosen to ignore. The editor, who has written at least half the book himself, obviously finds it hard to discover any gap between medieval and modern English literature and has compromised by calling his first chapter "On reading books from a half-alien culture" (my italics). At the beginning of his discussion of "King of a maiden" Stephen Medcalf notes that "medieval culture is not utterly alien to us but continuous, ancestral, familiar and goes on, somewhat defensively, in the operative; 'we may speak a language descended from a dialect, worship in their churches, share some of their presuppositions, religion and rituals'."

Medcalf's belief in the accessibility of medieval literature is as strong as that of C. S. Lewis, of whom he seems to have a high opinion. He is right, of course, but his definition of "half-alien culture" is too broad. It is not only the language and the rituals that are shared, but also the social and political structures, the religious and philosophical assumptions, the literary and artistic traditions, the scientific and technological achievements, the economic and social conditions, the political and military systems, the legal and administrative frameworks, the cultural and intellectual horizons, the human and divine experiences, the spiritual and moral values, the aesthetic and artistic sensibilities, the scientific and technological knowledge, the economic and social conditions, the political and military systems, the legal and administrative frameworks, the cultural and intellectual horizons, the human and divine experiences, the spiritual and moral values, the aesthetic and artistic sensibilities, the scientific and technological knowledge, the economic and social conditions, the political and military systems, the legal and administrative frameworks, the cultural and intellectual horizons, 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Takeover bids

C. M. Woodhouse

JOHN C. LOULIS

The Greek Communist Party 1940-1944
224pp. Croom Helm. £12.50.
0 7099 16124

LAURENCE S. WITTNER

American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949
445pp. Columbia University Press.
\$25.90.
0 231 04196 9

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) made three attempts to seize power by force, besides other attempts by infiltration. What was known as the first round took place in 1943-44, both in German-occupied Greece and among the armed forces in Egypt. The second took place in Athens, after liberation, in December 1944. The third was the civil war of 1946-49. As can be seen from the dates in the titles of these two books, John Loulis covers the first two rounds and Lawrence Wittner covers all three, though only the third in depth.

Loulis is a representative of a new wave of young Greek historians who see no point in pretending that the National Liberation Front (ELAM) was anything other than a creature of the KKE. This simple truth has failed to percolate to many middle-aged Western historians, to whom his book is therefore warmly to be recommended. They should also be warned that he is equally representative of an older wave of historians to whom most of their predecessors are dunces.

His advantage is that he has had

access to Greek Communist documents and reminiscences as well as published and unpublished British and American records. One could hardly want more. His account of the genesis of the KKE and EAM is convincing; and he has a sound grasp of the principles and objectives of British policy. It is interesting to find a young Greek, whose sympathies probably lie with EAM, writing with unequivocal objectivity about the Greek Communists and even going out of his way to find excuses for their opponents, such as Zervos and Papandreu.

Where he does not carry complete conviction is in his confident analysis of internal relations within the KKE leadership. He rejects the notion that there were divergences of policy between hard-liners and moderates, or any other factions within the party. On inspection, his argument turns out to mean little more than that, on the two or three areas of policy which he examines, there was invariably agreement between the two men who dominated the party, Siantos and Ioannidis.

Even for this rather narrow refutation of a wider hypothesis, Loulis relies largely on the memoirs of Ioannidis, for Siantos died mysteriously thirty-five years ago and was later denounced as a traitor. Loulis is too young to have talked with more than a handful of war-time Communists, and one or two of those he interviewed were too junior to be privy to top-level secrets. Some of those now dead, such as Tzimas, might have given him a different impression.

If the leadership of the KKE was really unanimous throughout the German occupation, it was the only time in the party's history that this happened. Before the war, as Loulis shows, the party was in continuous,

often comical disarray. After the war its leaders quarrelled in the 1950s over the Tito-Stalin dispute and in the 1960s over the Sino-Soviet dispute. In the 1970s they split into two distinct parties.

Whether the leadership really remained of one mind throughout the German occupation remains doubtful. Loulis provides some new evidence that they did not, although he takes an opposite view himself. At least two leading Communists seem to have opposed the decision to acquiesce in the return of British forces in September 1944; and Ioannidis himself had reservations about the decision to launch the December rising, which was taken in his absence.

One cannot dissent from Loulis's main thesis, however, which is that the KKE had several opportunities of gaining power either by infiltration or by confrontation, but missed them through miscalculations. This is a careful and thorough, if rather self-satisfied, account of a complex and crucial period in Greek history.

Professor Wittner's study of the American intervention is also careful and thorough, but far from self-satisfied. He has clearly been shocked by what he discovered about US policy between 1947 and 1950. He judges it to have been a disastrous failure, not only because twenty-five years later the Americans were the most unpopular of all foreigners in Greece but also because the supposed success of the intervention led to similar errors of policy in Vietnam and elsewhere.

Wittner examines the American intervention under different heads, chapter by chapter: in politics, in military operations, in economic policy, in the trade unions, and so on. In every case he is severely critical both of the US Missions and of the Greek

government of the day. He also studies the international context, from the first assumption of a Soviet conspiracy which led to the Truman Doctrine down to the belated realization that Stalin knew little about Greece and cared less. His conclusion is that the intervention was motivated principally by concern over oil supplies from the Middle East, and based on "erroneous facts".

Much of his argument is unchallengeable, being based on US official documents. But he is handicapped by knowing too little about the KKE and its allies. His criticisms are sometimes ungenerous and not always fully informed. He finds it wrong of the Greek government to have arrested such distinguished people as the two republican officers, Saraphis and Bakirdiz, and the wife of Professor Svolos; but he seems

unaware that all three were once members of the KKE. At the time perhaps the government was not, but also unwilling even to give any credit to the American Mission or its Greek authorities for their tolerance in allowing known Communists to take their seats in Parliament less than a year after the end of the civil war.

Wittner's story is a melancholy one but perhaps not so bad as he makes it. American unpopularity in Greece is likely to be a passing phase; whereas the technique devised in Greece was mistaken but because of circumstances were utterly different. In any case it would be valuable to know the other side of the third round, subjected to the same stringency analysis which Loulis has applied to the first two rounds.

Promises of expansion

Dankwart A. Rustow

JACOB M. LANDAU

Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A Study of Irredentism
219pp. Hurst. £11.50.
0 955838 57 2

"A sick man", Tsar Nicholas called the Ottoman sultan in 1853, but soon the disease was to catch up with the Habsburg emperors in Vienna and Nicholas's own heirs in St Petersburg. Everywhere the ideals of enlightenment, material progress, and self-determination were challenging religious orthodoxy and absolute, hereditary rule. The first to espouse nationalism were compactly settled subject-groups such as Poles, Serbs, Czechs and Greeks, followed later by dissidents among the imperial ruling groups: Austrians, Hungarians, Russians and Ottoman Turks. On this shifting ideological scene, Pan-Turkism championed the cause of the Turkic-speaking Muslims of the Tsarist empire - Tatars, Azeris, Kazakhs, Turkmens, Uzbeks and many others - and their cultural links with Ottoman Turkey.

Jacob M. Landau, a political scientist at the Hebrew University and an authority on modern Turkey, traces the origins of the movement in Russia and its later evolution in Turkey. Future historians are indebted to Landau for the more than 1,000 footnotes and extensive bibliography that record his diligent researches in the libraries of Istanbul and Ankara and the archives of London and Bonn.

His narrative provides vivid glimpses of the social tensions and political reversals that shape the course of ideology. Pan-Turkism started as a response to Pan-Slavism and pressures (of Russification). Linguistic reformers such as Ismail Gasprinsky were proud to see the graduation of their secular Turkic-Tatar curriculum excel at Russian and European universities above those of the older Koranic schools. In Istanbul refugees from Russia joined with Ottoman intellectuals such as the lexicographer Semtin Sami and the novelist Halide Edib in extolling the culture and history of the Turks of Central Asia. In 1904 an article by Gasprinsky's friend Yusuf Akcura contrasted Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism as the rival ideologies of the day.

The "Young Turks" who seized power in 1908 felt no strong commitment to Ottomanism or the deposed sultan's Pan-Islam. When Albania and Macedonia were lost in the war of 1912-13, some of them consoled themselves with fantasies of conquest in the east, and the collapse of the Tsarist regime seemed to bring such dreams within reach.

Instead there followed what Landau calls the "latent stage" of Pan-Turkism. In Russia the Bolsheviks combined linguistic autonomy with ruthless political centralization to reunite most of the tsar's domains. In Turkey, Kemal Atatürk averted the threat of colonial partition, built

up his republic as a Westernized nation-state, cultivated friendly relations with the Soviet Union and other neighbours, and indulged in Pan-Turkism only as a linguistic, not a political, programme. Landau might have added that even Atatürk's "history thesis", which was not of relevant Joyce critics like David Hayman and Hugh Kenner and terms from Stephen Ullmann, Dorrit Cohn, Wayne Booth, Wolfgang Iser and Roland Barthes.

He argues, first of all, that there is a fairly conventional third-person narrative voice in the first episodes of *Ulysses*. Divergences from it are applicable in the of the characters present, either as interior monologue or as a kind of narration in which the idiom of a character is adopted by the narrator, in a manner that will be familiar to readers of Joyce since *Dubliners*. In the "Aeolus" episode, however, the reader is confronted with those unvarying "boldface phrases" (she means upper-case phrases but let it pass) which are not explicable as the thoughts or utterances of any of the characters present or as the directions of an impersonal narrator. At this point *Ulysses* "begins to advertise its own artifice" and play language-games which seem to confirm Jacques Derrida's insistence on the problematic separation of writing from the authorial consciousness.

Internal requirements

Richard Brown

KAREN LAWRENCE

The Odyssey of Style in "Ulysses"
229pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £13.10.
0 691 06487 3

Questions of narrative and style have always been of the utmost importance in the criticism of *Ulysses* but somehow they have never been properly settled. Perhaps, as Karen Lawrence suggests, we have found it easier to seek out coherent mythic and symbolic structures than to confront *Ulysses* on the level of narrative style, where its fundamental discontinuities become most apparent. Perhaps, also, the critical technology that was available before the recent upsurge in literary theory was too blunt to account for the considerable complexity of Joyce's achievement in this area.

Karen Lawrence is admirably liberated from such constraints. She has purged herself of received assumptions about myths and symbols in Joyce and, in their place, she parades an armoury of recent theoretical terminology, which includes the most relevant Joyce critics like David Hayman and Hugh Kenner and terms from Stephen Ullmann, Dorrit Cohn, Wayne Booth, Wolfgang Iser and Roland Barthes.

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Not to be trusted

Imre Salusinszky

WILLIAM RIGGAN

Picaros, Madmen, Naffs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator
206pp. University of Oklahoma Press. \$14.95.
0 8061 1714 1

Picaros, Madmen, Naffs and Clowns discusses cases of unreliable narration, with many examples ranging from Lucius Apuleius to Saul Bellow, where a fictional autobiographer recounts his life "in a conscious act of writing".

The analysis is organized under the four types of narrator mentioned in the title. "Picaros" like Augie March and "clowns" like Shandy tend toward conscious dissimulation or reticence. "Madmen" and "naffs" have far less control over their own tales. An unhinged narrator, like Fowles's Clegg, gives us merely a "reflection of his own twisted impressions, confused thought patterns, or neurotic obsessions". Naffs like Huckleberry Finn or Holden Caulfield see less than they actually tell, and unlike the other three types, evade the stigma of the societies which their narratives implicitly condemn.

William Riggan, it will be seen, employs Wayne Booth's distinction between a narrator and the more reliable "implied author" behind him, constructed by the "reliable narrative" as the "to convey the implied author's veneration or at least serious critique of given social norms and practices".

Rhetorical figures abound in the episode, suggesting that the writing has begun to move by its own internal, formal requirements rather than by the needs of conveying character and action. Joyce, we are told, gives his readers a breather in "Cestrygonians" and "Scylla and Charybdis", reverting to something like the norm of narrative plus a stream of consciousness, but in "Wandering Rocks" and in "Sirens" he returns to his old tricks and the stylistic extravaganzas of the later chapters is begun in earnest.

Lawrence takes each of these later chapters in turn, from the parodic intrusions which help to deflate the bombast of the named narrator of the "Cyclops" episode, through the sub-editor's nightmare of cliché and redundancy in "Eumaeus", to the surprising reconciliation of character and narrative idiom in "Penelope". Her investigations are detailed, original and interesting and include such well-observed novelties as the notion that many of the later stylistic modes are anticipated in aspects of earlier ones.

Ulysses is shown as a concerted and subversive enquiry into the nature of narrative writing. It is held to respond to modern anxieties about the impossibility of containing the multiplicity of life within a narrative fiction and to modern suspicions of rhetoric and style. It is not, however, seen as an entirely depressing book which attests to the futility of all language, but rather as one in which Joyce's own enormous linguistic virtuosity gives us a sense of expanding possibilities, even if none of these possibilities can aspire to ultimate authority.

It is claimed, moreover, that *Ulysses* "paradoxically" brings us closer to life. At various points Kenner's suggestion, that Bloom's pain at Molly's adultery lies behind a host of stylistic distortions, is taken up and expanded. There may be something in this, but how such apparent mimeticism may be reconciled with the basically anti-mimetic drift of the rest of the argument is not clear. In the end it is the force of modern linguistic anxieties and not the rich suggestiveness of *Ulysses* that will leave the strongest impression on any reader of this account. But that is not such a bad thing, for many forbidding problems are tackled here that propagandists for Joyce's "humanity" leave unexplored.

Negatively questing

Raman Selden

HELENE L. BALDWIN

Samuel Beckett's Real Silence
171pp. Pennsylvania State University Press. £8.25.
0 271 00301 4

This book challenges the received view of Beckett as prophet of civilization's death throes. Helene Baldwin regards Beckett as a religious writer, who undertakes the "quest" for experience of the Absolute through the *via negativa* of Christian mysticism. The "negative way" of renunciation is compared with T. S. Eliot's affirmative route. The book painstakingly details the parallels between the landscapes, themes, and idiom of Beckett's middle period (from the trilogy to *Waiting for Godot*) and the poetry of Dante, Langland and Eliot. The writings of modern mystics (especially Simone Weil and Rudolph Otto) provide a contemporary gloss on Beckett's "quest".

The book enlarges our understanding of the Christian analogues of Beckett's work. However, valuable as this is, the conclusions drawn are questionable. In Christian mysticism God's arcaneness or seeming absence does not imply his non-existence, but one cannot deduce from this that Beckett's "nothingness" and "void" are for him too "the very ground of Being". Neither does the "influence" of Dante, Langland and Eliot entail such ontological implications. Beckett's disgust at sexuality resembles Dante's but does not necessarily connote other-worldliness. Professor Baldwin is sometimes

dangerously tendentious, for example when she declares: "So much reliance on Dante's structure and imagery at the very least argues some interest in Dante's metaphysics." Beckett's interest in metaphysics is evident, but it is perhaps more reasonable to believe that his works are about the end of metaphysics. Baldwin argues that secular readings of Beckett ignore the richness and complexity of Beckett's Christian allusions by viewing them ironically or cynically. In my view, Beckett's position is neither "mystical" nor "nihilistic".

The following exchange occurs in *Waiting for Godot*:

Vladimir: What about trying them?
Estragon: I've tried everything.
Vladimir: I mean the boots.

Beckett here illustrates the pitfall all readers of his work can scarcely avoid. Everywhere we see the universal and the transcendental. Having the openness of a sacred text, his writings are often subjected to the reductive demands of allegory and exegesis. Beckett's M-characters, it is argued, are embarked on a religious quest which "involves stripping away of possessions" and eventually experiencing a mystical communion". Godot is God, and Vladimir and Estragon are the modern "faithful" who perform the minimum required of them (waiting). "This," we are to believe, "appears to be an accurate picture of the average man-in-the-street's relationship to God in his church."

The problem facing Beckett criticism has always been to elicit the precise significance of his cultural allusions. The novels and plays bear the weight of the cultural and

metaphysical accumulation of two thousand years. However, this "culture" is like the traces of ancient deposits and fossil remains. There is an emptying of meaning (not the same thing as nihilism): metaphysics suffers attenuation rather than ironic or cynical inversion. To suggest that the protagonists of *Godot* are "the typical illiterate illiterates of today" and that their tenuous grasp of the concept of repentance reflects "the confusion which today surrounds the whole notion of sin" is to attribute an oddly sanctimonious satirical intention to Beckett. It is more plausible to regard the "impoverishment of Christian culture" in the work of Beckett as elegiac rather than satiric or monitory. Theodor Adorno's account of the status of "thought" in Beckett seems more apt: "Beckett employs thoughts, says phrasal, as clichés, elements of the *monologue intérieur* to which the mind itself has been reduced, by the reified regression of culture." The Universe is no longer to be comprehended by the forms of philosophy and religion.

Professor Baldwin's argument is given a more persuasive force by the omission of Beckett's later work, from *Endgame* onwards. She argues that the writings of the period 1956-66 reveal an "increasing despair and nausea". Evidently, this stage can be subsumed within a religious pilgrimage without difficulty. The stigma of Beckett cannot be solved by such a neat reappropriation, such a comforting return to Being. However, the book establishes convincingly the pervasive presence of religious and metaphysical discourses in Beckett, and challenges the reader either to accept its allegory of the quest or to provide a more plausible reading.

Up from the basement

Peter Kemp

JOHN R. REED

The Natural History of H. G. Wells
294pp. Ohio University Press. £16.10.
0 8214 0628 0

"To lay down the main lines of Mr Wells's Weltanschauung", a critic wrote in 1926, "necessitates a bird's-eye view of a range of material appalling in its extent." By the time Wells died, twenty years after this, he had piled almost another fifty books on the Himalayan heap. Miscellaneous as well as massive - science fiction, comic novels, history, utopias, text books, tracts, untidily tumbled into a sprawling agglomeration - Wells's collected writings dauntingly discourage overall exploration. "We are, from the outset, fully conscious of the vastness of the subject and of the arduous task the completion of such a task will entail", dispiritedly remarked the Norwegian critic, Ingvald Rakneim, bracing himself to chart Wells's widespread oeuvre.

John R. Reed, in *The Natural History of H. G. Wells*, has also undertaken to survey all the writer's work, and has performed the task exceptionally clearly. Despite unevenness of quality and diversity of genre, Wells's writing, he contends, is unified by "a world view that remained coherent and mainly consistent". A series of perceptive chapters unravel what Reed sees as the key linking themes: "persistent motifs and recurrent ideas" such as liberation, nature, flesh and blood, identity, progress, organization, will. A concluding section assesses Wells's attitude towards, and achievements in, literary artistry.

While knowledgeably indicating differing intellectual influences on Wells, Reed makes the crucial point that his "world view was rooted in... private fears and desires". Many of these, it is rightly stressed, originated in the messy meagreness of Wells's early life. His utopias, for instance, not only represent the opposite of the environment in which he grew up, but the basement under the Bromley shop. Where that was dark, cramped, disorganized, Wells's ideal States are light, spacious, orderly. In

imagination, he travels as far as possible from the frowsty underground confinement of his early life: something he encountered more instances of than Reed records - besides the basement, there were the subterranean servants' quarters at Up-park where he sometimes stayed with his mother, the "sort of vault underground" in which he ate when working in a drapery, and "the underground front room" he lodged in as a student in London.

Reed does not always make as much as he might of those aspects of Wells's life which he sees as having shaped his writings and his thought; he virtually overlooks, for example, one of the most important factors - a childhood of near-malnutrition which left a lasting mark on Wells's imagination as well as his body. Noting that "Wells was an obsessive writer", Reed fails to document the most pervasive and colourful of his obsessions: a lifetime's preoccupation with food and eating, topics to which he invariably reacts with intense imaginative excitement.

As Reed indicates, Wells lays much stress on the fact that human beings are flesh and blood. What this book doesn't explore is the chief way he does this: by showing flesh being eaten and blood drunk. A remarkably high proportion of Wells's characters are eaten; a large number of others are bitten, nibbled, dribbled on, pecked, munched, and generally subjected to hungry assault by predators ranging from homicidal orchids to voracious octopuses, from cannibals to carnivores, including giant beetles and an emu-sized chicken. The idea of humanity as provender fascinates Wells (as in his bizarre tribute to this, his fiction offers an impressive spread of characters with food-names - from Amontillado through to Wensleydale). And he is equally engrossed by the means by which it obtains: his own devouring. Wells's books devote lovingly extensive coverage to their characters' diets and eating habits - and the digestive difficulties that can follow. Mr. Polly is a novel built around dyspepsia. The Invisible Man has problems with his see-through stomach (when he eats, the food remains inconspicuously visible until assimilated into his system). Contact with the culinary is so deeply and eccentrically embedded in Wells's imagination that it even extends to speculation about

the way he'd prefer to be cooked: as he makes clear in *Heatby*, he'd much rather be fried than boiled.

Sensibly noting the way *ideas fives* give Wells's work a real coherence, despite its seeming diversity, Reed is less successful in demonstrating the inventive extravagance with which they are expressed. The result is to make Wells sound less exciting and more respectable than he actually is. This stands out most obviously, perhaps, in the section on Wells's attitude to women. Here, Reed pertinently draws attention to Wells's revelation, in his autobiography, that pubescent peerings at loosely draped drawings of Britannia, Erin, La France, and the like in *Punch* gave him a lifetime's taste for monumental ladies. The impact of this on his fiction, though, goes much further than the propensity for introducing "Amazonian" women which Reed remarks on. Not content with making his women statuesque, Wells has an unstoppable urge to perch them on plinth-like objects - walls, steps, a tower, a tree, a slab at Stonehenge, various mountain tops. Looking up at women regularly thrills his males (and often the woman is socially elevated, too). Despite the apparent veneration in this, though, it is surely wrong to regard Wells - as Reed does - as a "champion" of women. It's never long before the more admirable are brought down to earth, grovelling at a man's feet. And Wells's fiction returns fixatedly to the idea of the destructive woman, sabotaging male careers. Usually a selfish spouse, this type can sometimes take weirdly baroque forms - like the murderous mermaid who flips into the narrative of *The Sea Lady*.

Professor Reed does a fine job in plotting Wells's chief preoccupations, tracking down key statements of them in even the most remote recesses of his oeuvre. The main problem may be rather, too tidy and too pale to encompass all the giddy waywardness of Wells's imagination, but it is admirably lucid, precise, and informatively detailed.

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Sharing loneliness in Babel

Victoria Glendinning

PENELOPE GILLIATT

Quotations From Other Lives

160pp. Secker and Warburg. £6.95.
0 436 17593 2

On a quick first reading Penelope Gilliatt's latest stories seem incoherent. Undoubtedly, they are lucid, well-crafted, deliberate: the apparent incoherence comes from a startling rejection of one of the cooler assumptions of short-story writers, that a situation or incident is to be captured and given meaning in isolation, by exclusion of the sounds of other voices in other rooms. Penelope Gilliatt's characters live footloose in the global village, or in Babel, wanting to belong somewhere and finding a frail security, or an imperfect love, in arbitrary encounters. In "When Are You Going Back?" an American girl in London, feeling excluded by the "ungentle" British and their well-bred silences, feels suddenly happier in a Pakistani restaurant with a doctor she met in a shop who is actually working as a waiter (all the while, "unfriendly" men in these stories spend a lot of time not doing the thing they were trained for). In the polyglot restaurant, "languages got mixed in her ears."

Take the first paragraph of the first story, "Break," which sets the atmosphere for them all:

Alastair Brown's Scots ancestors had leapt over the Roman Wall to the North of England many centuries ago, but his later ancestors must have been as restless as in Scotland, for in the fifteenth century a line of them had fled to what is now Czechoslovakia. Alastair, a Czech child in the nineteenth-century times of anti-Semitism, had extremely formally told his family and friends that he was now to be called Eli. He wished to belong.

This particular hybrid qualifies in law and medicine at Oxford and in New York, and his "own man". He falls in love thanks to an error: the woman is not the wrong surgery and never should have come to him at all. Mistaken identity is also the key to luck in "Fakt", in which an English MP of Polish name and origin is invited back to his home village to be fêted and honoured. Small wonder that he cannot remember anyone: he is the wrong man. No one minds. Poles and Czechs abound in these pages, presumably because, as the MP says, "In Poland, everything is arbitrary. We've been used as a corridor for so long."

There are urgent communications scattered through these tales like notices in a surreal railway station. "Exits important. Cleave to choice." Perhaps that's also why there are so many cats around. "The cat sat daintily, poised for exit, watching." Penelope Gilliatt's people keep their balance by listening to music - mostly "early music", played on a clavichord, but also, in a dentist's surgery, John Cage - and by using old adages, newspaper headlines, proverbs, as points of reference. There are "words to be saved" in Babel, and one story is set at a meeting of a Christmas-cracker company, thinking up new - or rather old - riddles and mottoes. "It's not the thought, it's the words that count."

Food counts too. In more than one story, people irrationally stock up with chocolate bars like emergency rations, as if for a Himalayan expedition. A great many meals are described and eaten and washed up; garlic seems to have a significance beyond the usual.

Those that cling to their original roots - aristocrats in reduced circumstances in English country houses, for example - find coherence no more easily. Mothers die, or run away. "In Trust", which is written as a playlet, has a girl who is bullied by her grandparents all through her childhood into accepting that their beautiful old house in a London square is her sacred

heritage, to be cherished and preserved when they are gone. When inflation makes them change their tune for their own convenience, it is the girl who, uncomprehending, is betrayed.

Very old people play a large part. One arbitrary but temporarily happy conjunction is between a doddering professor and a nineteen-year-old student, elsewhere octogenarian lovers who have fretted for years against circumstances are presented with the possibility of being together. Living with someone, for most of Penelope Gilliatt's people, is just about as painful as separation, especially for the old who remember only the language of complaint and compromise.

But loneliness is the shared terror.

Saved by M'Gill

Lindsay Duguid

IAN J. BURTON

All Along the Skyline

163pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

£6.95.

0 297 78143 X

All Along the Skyline is the third novel by a former labourer whose first book, *Out of Season*, became a New Fiction Society Choice. Which may or may not indicate that this is a work that should be taken seriously. In addition to its literary claims, *All Along the Skyline* makes a bid for attention by dealing with the subjects of unemployment and urban blight.

The book describes ten days in the life of Jack, an out-of-work lorry driver, who lives in a tower block in a carefully unspecified provincial town with his wife and son. Much of his life is the stuff of the social worker's case

sheet: he suffers from a sense of hopelessness as a result of being downgraded, then losing his job; he finds himself unable to talk to his teenage son Gary and he is needlessly afraid that his wife Audrey will leave him for someone else. He also experiences various forms of alienation familiar from the psychiatric case-sheet: he has visions, has a fear of an all-powerful bureaucracy (the Council Housing Department is convincingly presented as fearsome), feels that he has taken a wrong turning, is living the wrong life, and so on. Jack's thoughts and feelings, which take up most of the novel, are presented against a background of tower blocks with broken lifts, graffiti, litter, bomb sites and muggers; he also lives through a series of nightmare encounters with officialdom, faceless personnel in offices who try to convince him that Audrey should have married someone else. These "interviews", which take place at night, are neither fantasy nor allegory; they convey a certain menace, they do not quite achieve their aim as a measure of Jack's hopelessness.

In any case, before too long Jack finds the promise of future happiness. He discovers that he can talk to Gary about his favourite pop singer M'Gill; he makes friends with a young man called Joe and realizes that he has not lost his skill at mending motor-bikes. Finally he drives a lorry to London to one of M'Gill's concerts and forges a new doctrine of self reliance out of the songs he hears and the brightly dressed young people that he sees. Even the Housing Department turns up triumphs, offering to rehouse the family near some green fields. Gary leaves home to live with his new girlfriend and Jack writes "I love you" on the misted up window of the new house (love in this case also means being able, since you have now got back your self-respect, to tell your wife not to be so bloody silly).

Leonardo Sciascia's *Candido*, or *A Dream Dreamed in Sicily*, a story of conflicting ideologies - those of Church and Party - in post-war Sicily, which was first published in Italian in 1977, was reissued earlier this year in an English translation by Adrienne Poole (132pp. Carcanet New Press. £5.95. 85635 404X).

enemy agents, and is ultimately instrumental in the winning of the Battle of Camperdown. The author's knowledge of maritime matters, which was praised by *Lloyd's List*, is indeed formidable, but one cannot help wishing he would also try harder to generate suspense and tension.

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double crime and, in order to carry out her plan, makes contact with Khaled, a terrorist leader. Her desire dovetails with a plan of his own, and so he assists her. Attracted by his cool fanaticism, Tagarid becomes more deeply involved in his violent activities than he had originally intended. Keeping a watchful and amorous eye on her is Matt Curran, who, while posing as a businessman, is (surprise) a British agent.

As a tale of intrigue and terrorism, *Travellers in an Antique Land* is reasonably successful. The plot is thin, but the small cast of characters is drawn with skill and economy; they may be types, but they have sufficient individuality not to become stereotypes. The intrusion of Matt's love for Tagarid into their professional and political relationship is well depicted, and her intense attraction to Khaled does not, mercifully, lead to the standard trope affair. Creed has a keen sense of place, and conveys the danger and the atmosphere as well as the physical features of the Lebanese towns and countryside. (He slips, though, when he invents a nineteenth-century Cistercian abbey, which will make architectural historians sit up.)

Yet how curiously Creed writes: he deftly places a scene, but can't let it well alone, so buries it under a succession of words: "Then from the self behind her closed eyes, up out of the swirling, giving love of their bodies the work swirled unthought, running on the tide of the physical joy. . . Such tide of the physical joy. . . Such tide of the physical joy. . . Such tide of the physical joy. . ."

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Many writers in English are capable of that, and of little else. Most fiction comforts and amuses by imposing some sort of order - even order of a perverse kind - on the chaos of experience. These stories face disaster comically and head on, which is why they seem at first incoherent.

Quotations From Other Lives asking to have to strain your ears to pick up what is going on in the hubbub of history and accident. The alternative is a worse conversation go off the rails and then there are casualties and people getting killed because the carriers are at their sides by then and you don't have the slightest idea how to hold them again and the hell with it."

All this material is treated with great care. The narrative offers differing points of view; the chapters contain alternating day-time and night-time views of the city; there are tell-all sections in italics embedded in the text - newspaper headlines, television announcements and pop songs (none of these are very convincing parodies). There is a plethora of linked images - clocks, numbers, parallel lines, corridors and coloured lights. M'Gill's a Messiah figure whose song lyrics are based on the poems of William Blake. It is he who reunites Jack with Audrey and Gary and provides him with a reason for living. Can there be any significance in the fact that M'Gill appears to have been murdered by fans for trying out a new kind of music on Good Friday but gives on Easter Sunday?

This overloaded and difficult symbolism is not helped by the bawdiness of Burton's style. The odd, unrhymed prose flattens out even the "human interest" of the story: "His thoughts imploded, spiralled back inside him with the last, vanishing note of mist snaking around a now visible street corner"; "He lay still awhile, remembering, a faint smile on his lips. Burton writes some very dull sentences, but when he goes for colour the result is even less happy. "The room was silent and dark and the bomb site, dressed in dark velvet now and waiting." His dialogue, too, rings false. "Look, somehow I've got to get this crate fit for Sunday. I'm going to London, see? Couldn't give me a hand with the car could you?" Awkwardness of narrative technique may be evidence of the author's sincerity, but it imparts a dreaminess which neither the socially committed nor the literary minded will find attractive.

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LITERARY CRITICISM

A seventeenth-century feminist poet

Ruth Perry

Her sophistry I can controul
Who falsely say that women have no soul.

These lines, part of a four-stanza poem by the late seventeenth-century feminist Mary Astell, have only just been identified after lying nearly 300 years in the Bodleian Library. Having worked on the biography of this writer for more than five years, during which time I have painstakingly collected a few letters, poems, and a conversation go off the rails and then there are casualties and people getting killed because the carriers are at their sides by then and you don't have the slightest idea how to hold them again and the hell with it."

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Venerating the monument

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LAWRENCE DANSON (Editor)

On King Lear

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No one who knows Astell's prose works will be surprised by the content of her verse. The lines quoted above come from a poem called "Ambition", which is about her unquenchable urge to greatness only made fiercer by a proper womanly modesty. She must have written it when she was about eighteen, at the time she left her native Newcastle for Chelsea to follow a literary career.

Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three she dedicated herself with pious fervour to right living and holy thinking, and prepared herself for ostracism by the wits and gossips of the city and for ill success in the materialistic world. The surprise is rather that Astell wrote so many and such elaborate poems, for until now she has been known only for her prose tracts. These poems are rare, perhaps unique, in seventeenth-century English poetry, for they show Astell's intellectual interests and her articulate feminism. In one poem, for example, she notes that although her longing for self-sacrifice suggested missionary work to her, it was barred to her because of her sex:

How shall I be Peter or Paul?
That to the Turk and Infidel,
I might the joyful tidings tell,
And spare no labour to convert them all:

But ah my Sex denies me this,
And Marys Privilege I cannot wish.
Yet hark I hear my dearest Savior say,
They are more blessed who his Word obey.

The echo of Milton's sentiment

Venerating the monument

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"They also serve who only stand and wait" in the last couplet can be trusted. Astell read and admired his work and quoted him frequently. His influence on these poems is apparent elsewhere too, as in the twenty-page-long "Death" which begins by dramatizing the garden of Eden, the Temptation, and the Fall. But the more openly acknowledged debt in Astell's verse is to Abraham Cowley, whom like many of her contemporaries, Astell ranked far above Milton. Several of these poems are framed as answers to certain of Cowley's poems ("The Motto", "The Wish"), and she also uses the so-called "pindaric" stanza of end-rhymed iambic lines of unequal length. They imitate his subject matter as well, and like his poems these are personal lyrics about love, friendship, and dedication to a poetic ideal. Taken together, they constitute a symbolic pledge to poetry of a religious turn, the consecration of her neoclassical taste and talent to what was for her the highest subject, the love of God:

Heav'n thy Parnassus be thence learn
thy Song,
Thy Saviour's side shall be thy Helicon.

These poems have been preserved all these years among Dr Sancroft's papers simply as remarkable instances of poems written "By a Lady". To look at them now, knowing that Mary Astell wrote them, is to enlarge our understanding of her sensibility and simultaneously to enrich our knowledge of English poetry of the late seventeenth century.

essay to confront the tragic issue in a sustained manner is by Thomas P. Roche, which starts from that difficult phrase, "Nothing almost sees miracles", and delivers a timely attack on the idea of tragic knowledge, those compensatory insights into suffering that supposedly redeem the tragic hero, and reconcile him to his fate. Roche easily shows how irrelevant this idea is to the experience of the main tragic heroes, yet his own idea that *Lear* "is meant to depict the plight of man before the Christian era, that is, before the salvation of man by Christ's sacrifice was available", is an unconvincing alternative. The fact that the suffering in *King Lear* occurs in a pre-Christian context (in the setting of the play), does not mean that it longs for redemption. Roche rightly notes the lack of consolation at the end: "The ending of *Lear* is as bleak and unwavering as man can reach outside the gates of hell". But the meaning of works of literature does not reside solely in their conclusion. In the whole of the play there are many counterbalancing movements to the evil and destructiveness of Lear, Gloucester, Goneril, Regan, Edmund and Cornwall: the tragedy is that they arrive too late to prevent suffering and death. The conclusion also vindicates Edgar, Cordelia and Kent: whatever goes on in hell, at least, good is upheld.

The most depressing aspect of this collection is the sense these Princeton professors give that *King Lear* is an assured monument, not a painful and uncomfortable experience that shakes up our preconceived ideas about the rights of parents, or the value of families, or states. Hardly any of them become involved with the experience of tragedy. Theodore Weiss, in an overwrought and badly rhetorical essay, refers dismissively to Tolstoy's criticism, yet one could wish that some of these critics cared as deeply as Tolstoy did, right or wrong. The only

so far with the *Tour to the Hebrides*, whilst the *Account of Corsica* is pretty well left aside.

In essence this is a psychological reading, with heavy reliance on imagery as a clue to the workings of Boswell's mind. It could also be in some sense a contribution to biographic understanding, but Ingram does not date quotations and seems to wish to deflect such an approach. He draws on Freud, Sartre, Foucault and R. D. Laing: the relation of these secondary authorities to the argument is sometimes oblique, as on page 102, where Freud's very specific point is not quite identical with the one on which Ingram proceeds to elaborate.

The Boswell presented in these pages is a tortured individual, fondling self-madness and living "one step away from life, in a limbo where the real world exists in phantom form". There

In the act

John Stachniewski

JAMES E. HIRS